



THE BHOJPURI KITCHEN

PALLAVI NIGAM SAHAY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHABIN E.

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*I would like to dedicate this book to my
parents, Ashok & Deepa Nigam, and to my
sister, Sushmita, who always encouraged
me to follow my passion. . .*

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INTRODUCTION

‘*Masala tel choddhne tak bhunjna, dulhin,*’ (Saute the masala till you see the oil at the edges of the pan).

This was my grandmother-in-law’s advice on the day of my *chulha chulai*, my very first day in a Bhojpuri kitchen. My mother-in-law had told me about a Bihari tradition where a bride cooks her first traditional three-course meal for the entire family. It was on that day that my romance with Bihari khana began.

My curiosity about Bihari cuisine however began a few days earlier on my *kacchi* (a ceremony performed on the day after the wedding, where certain traditional Bihari dishes are prepared and served to the bridegroom’s party). I was absolutely fascinated that day by the delicious Baingan Badi ki Sabji (Aubergine Curry with Black Gram Cakes; [p. 62](#)), Pachphoran Kohra (Pumpkin cooked with Five Whole Spices; [p. 103](#)), Machli ka Sarsonwala Jhor (Mustard Fish Curry; [p. 88](#)), mutton curry, arwa chawal (parboiled rice), spicy chicken kababs and Kaala Jamun (Cottage Cheese Dumplings in Sugar Syrup; [p. 150](#)). Since then, I have been on an unending saga of loving and learning Bihari food. This book is about my beautiful journey across various Bhojpuri *bhansa ghars* (kitchens).

I belong to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh and after marrying Kunal, who is from Bihar, I knew that there would be plenty to learn, especially the state’s culture and traditions. But what I had not imagined was Bihar’s vast culinary world, which has so much to offer.

Biharis love their food. Take any festival – Holi, Diwali, Dussehra or Chhath (see, *The Festivals of Bihar*; [p. 23](#)) – and it’s more a celebration of food and serving different dishes than anything else. In fact, Biharis even change their wedding dates to complement their appetites. I have never been to a family wedding on a Tuesday or Thursday, the two days when the majority abstain from eating non-vegetarian food. No wonder then that one of their ex-CMs was called Rabri, and many kids in the state still respond to a

sweet name –Laddoo!

* * *

I am a major in Economics and was working with an insurance company when I got married. At that time, it seemed like a natural career path, because everyone around me, my husband, father, father-in-law and sister worked in the financial sector. But somehow, my work gave me neither happiness nor satisfaction.

My husband would often remark in a typical Bollywood fashion, '*Tumhari zindagi mein koi lakshya nahi hai!*' (You don't have an aim in life!) I agreed. The passion was missing. I wasn't the type to toss up data, mix up numbers and cook up theories. Since childhood, I'd a passion for food and cooking scrumptious meals, especially the appreciation that followed. The more I worked, the more I realized this. So one fine morning, in a serendipitous moment, I quit. And then, everything fell right into place.

After quitting my job, I decided to give my passion for cooking a professional shot and became a chef. The culinary world opened up opportunities to be creative, innovative, and most importantly, to be myself. When I am in my kitchen, I am the best version of myself. I always was, even when I tried baking my first cheesecake in a microwave oven. I don't need to elaborate how that first tryst with baking had turned out, but suffice it to say that since then, I have converted my hobby into a career and it has been one great adventure. It's almost like a treasure hunt story. But instead of gold, lost crowns, cities or horcruxes, I discovered masalas, cooking techniques and recipes.

I learnt from personal experience that the best recipes are often found in the most traditional places. For instance, during a culinary course in Italy, I was introduced to my favourite recipes while visiting small towns like, Costigliole d' Asti and Trieste; places that don't often feature in a common tourist's 'places to visit' list. Similarly, I discovered the best recipes from Bihar and Jharkhand while visiting our extended families in the remote regions of these states. It is often the dadis, nanis, chachis and bhaujais (grandmothers, aunts and sisters-in-law) who cook up the best meals.

In this book, I have brought together my experiences with the magical culinary fare of Bihar and Jharkhand. There are recipes like Litti Chokha

(Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and Served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p. 4](#)), Ghughni (Whole Bengal Gram Curry; [p. 56](#)), Dhuska (Rice and Bengal Gram Pancakes; [p. 8](#)) and Parwal ki Mithai (Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd; [p. 140](#)) which are absolute classics that never disappoint. Then there are my takes on a few recipes such as Madhubani Chicken Curry (see [p. 82](#)), Tehri (Vegetable Pulao; [p. 13](#)), koftas and kababs which are healthy, tasty and modified to suit the modern Indian palate. There are also simple and quick recipes for the end of a busy day, such as Lauki aur Pyaaz ka Ishtew (Bottle Gourd and Onion Stew; [p. 73](#)), Chana Daal Nenua (Sponge Gourd and Bengal Gram Curry; [p. 64](#)) and Daal Pithori (Lentil Broth with Wheat Flour Dumplings; [p. 17](#)). Then of course are the indulgent, but beautiful local desserts, which always elevate the sagging spirits of any one who challenges the might of these magical sweet and syrupy potions. So, I hereby present the soul of the Magadh Empire: *The Bhojpuri Kitchen*.

A DAY IN THE BHOJPURI KITCHEN

A typical weekday in the bhansa ghar or Bhojpuri kitchen starts with the aroma of fresh tea boiling on fire. During summer, a refreshing elaichi chai (cardamom-flavoured tea) is preferred, while on colder mornings a hot, adarak-masala chai (spiced ginger tea) is welcome. Morning tea is a very special time, as all the family members sit together before getting busy with their daily chores. Sometimes, the most important decisions are made during this hour, while other mornings are spent over *chai ki chuskiyan* (gossiping and chit-chatting over tea).

The choice of accompanying snacks varies with the season. During summer, the preferred snacks are Nimkee (Savoury Pastry Sticks; [p. 51](#)) and Khurma (Sugar-glazed Pastry; [p. 158](#)), while everyone looks forward to Til ké Laddoo or tilkut (Sesame Seed and Jaggery Sweet; [p. 148](#)), and Bachka (Bengal Gram Fritters; [p. 34](#)) in the winters. During the monsoons, there is nothing better than the Singhada (Potato-stuffed Pastries; [p. 48](#)). A simple but fortifying breakfast follows the morning tea. The favourite dishes for breakfast are, Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#)), roti with bhujia (see, The Bold Bhujias of Bihar; [p. 93](#)), Dahi Choorā Gud (Flaky Rice with Curd and Jaggery; [p. 20](#)), and Chooré ka Pulao (Flaky Rice Pulao; [p. 46](#)).

Lunch traditionally comprises steamed rice, daal (lentils), bhujia, curd and a salad. It used to be the main meal of the day, eaten together by all family members at home. But obviously, owing to altered lifestyles, eating patterns have changed across India, as they have in Bihar and Jharkhand. For example, in a modern-day nuclear family with parents and kids, people usually pack their lunch boxes with dry items such as roti with bhujia, stuffed parathas or Tehri.

Evening snacks in the region are equally important as kids come back

from school and parents may return from office, and it is time to look forward to some exciting refreshments. The choicest evening snacks in a Bhojpuri kitchen are Bachka, Bhabhra (Bengal Gram Pancakes; [p. 34](#)), and Chooré ka Pulao amongst others. My favourite evening snack however shall always be Choorá Mattar (Flaky Rice with Green Peas; [p. 42](#)). I love its crunchiness which goes perfectly with a hot cup of tea.

Dinner is usually a combination of roti and two types of vegetables. It may also include non-vegetarian dishes such as a chicken or mutton curry. As opposed to lunch, most families do not opt for rice at dinner. In my kitchen, it can never be just one vegetarian dish. There must be two varieties of vegetables along with salads and other accompaniments.

However, when it comes to weekends, the menu is a little more elaborate. On Saturday mornings, people generally enjoy Papra (Gram Flour Crêpes; [p. 32](#)), Dhuska and paratha for breakfast. No Saturday lunch is ever complete without the robust Laukiwali Geeli Khichdi (Bottle Gourd Rice Porridge; [p. 15](#)). At dinner, a special curry is usually rustled up to round off Saturday evenings. For instance, in my house it is fish curry and roti.

Come Sunday mornings, and it is the humble roti with one sabji on my family's table. No, it is not because it is my day of rest, but because one is gearing up to enjoy a hearty lunch! Sunday lunches are synonymous with non-vegetarian dishes such as masala chicken curry or mutton curry, accompanied with rice. It is followed by a light dinner comprising Daal Pithori (Lentil Broth with Wheat Flour Dumplings; [p. 17](#)), or roti with Chana Daal Nenua.

If you ever want to witness the Bhojpuri culinary world first-hand, then you should visit a Bihari household hosting a son-in-law, commonly referred to as *mehmaan*. From morning to night, it is a food festival. There is no regular sabji or roti — each meal is transformed into an elaborate three-course fare! Here, for example, is the menu that we 'created' when we hosted my husband's didi and jijaji (elder sister and brother-in-law):

BREAKFAST

- Dhuska, Ghughni, Vegetable Pakoda (Vegetable Fritters; [p. 39](#)), Oal ki Chutney (Yam Chutney; [p. 128](#))
- Dahi Choorá Gud

LUNCH

Starters

- Kachché Kelé ké Cutlets (Banana Cutlets; [p. 50](#))
- Peetha (Wheat Flour Dumplings stuffed with Bengal Gram; [p. 6](#))

Main Course

- Madhubani Chicken Curry
- Lauki ké Kofté ki Sabji (Bottle Gourd Kofta Curry; [p. 72](#))
- Gobhi Mattar ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Cauliflower and Green Peas; [p. 100](#))
- Dahi Bada (Lentil Fritters Served with Curd and Chutney; [p. 19](#))
- Tehri / Roti
- Dahiwalá Murcha (Green Chillies Pickled with Curd; [p. 126](#))
- Neembu ka Achaar (Lime Pickle; [p. 122](#))
- Papad

Dessert

- Maal Pua (Sweet Pancakes; [p. 156](#))

Evening Snacks

- Bachka Chutney (Bengal Gram Chutney)
- Choorá Mattar
- Til ké Laddoo or tilkut

DINNER

Starters

- Vegetable Pakoda
- Spicy Bihari Kababs (see [p. 90](#))

Main Course

- Baingan Badi ki Sabji (Aubergine Curry with Black Gram Cakes; [p. 62](#))
- Methi ka Saag (Fenugreek Greens; [p. 115](#))
- Aaloo Baingan ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Aubergines and Potatoes; [p. 98](#))
- Sattu Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#))
- Bharwan Laal Murcha ka Achaar (Stuffed Red Chilli Pickle; [p. 125](#))
- Dhania ki Chutney (Fresh Coriander Chutney; [p. 129](#))

Dessert

- Anarsa (Rice Flour and Jaggery Dumplings; [p. 144](#))

COMFORT FOOD

Comfort food reminds me of my childhood, my naughtiness around the dining table, beautiful summer vacations at my grandparents' home, climbing trees with my cousins, plucking fresh mangoes and so many other lovely memories. It is like a time machine which transports me back to those warm, comfortable days of my childhood.

Whenever I prepare a dish from this section, my dining room comes alive with childhood stories by my husband and in-laws, recalling how their mothers cooked these delicious dishes on the traditional lakdi ka chulha (wood fire). Such conversations always left me enriched with the great culinary heritage of Bihar.

In fact, your favourite comfort food quite literally defines you. My husband's is Dhuska (Rice and Bengal Gram Pancakes; [p. 8](#)) which perfectly matches his temperament: crisp and straight forward! In my husband's mind, the satisfaction he derives from eating Daal Pithori (Lentil Broth with Wheat Flour Dumplings; [p. 17](#)) and homemade Laukiwali Geeli Khichdi (Bottle Gourd Rice Porridge; [p. 15](#)) cannot match any gastronomical treat in the world.



LITTI CHOKHA

Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and
Served with a Spicy Potato Mash

PEETHA

Wheat Flour Dumplings stuffed with Bengal Gram

DHUSKA

Rice and Bengal Gram Pancakes

DAAL PARATHA AUR AAMRAS

Flatbread stuffed with Bengal Gram, Served with Mango
Purée

TEHRI

Vegetable Pulao

LAUKIWALI GEELI KHICHDI

Bottle Gourd Rice Porridge

DAAL PITHORI

Lentil Broth with Wheat Flour Dumplings

DAHI BADA

Lentil Fritters Served with Curd and Chutney

DAHI CHOORA GUD

Flaky Rice with Curd and Jaggery

SATTU KI KACHODI

Fritters stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour



LITTI CHOKHA

Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and Served with a Spicy Potato Mash

Think of any region in the world and you are instantly reminded of its cuisine. If you think of Italy, you think of pastas and pizzas. For France, it's cheese and wine. Similarly, when I think of Bihari khana, the first thing that strikes me is the legendary Litti Chokha.

It is the king of every Bhojpuri kitchen, loved by people across ages. My husband tells me numerous tales of eating it off wood-fired ovens in the interiors of the state. His love for the litti supersedes everything else and is the best 'make him happy and get my job done' dish for me, if you know what I mean!

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Whole wheat flour (atta): 2 cups

Salt: ½ tsp

Ghee: 2 tbsp

Water: ½ cup or as required

For the filling

Sattu (roasted gram flour): 1 cup

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped:

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl.
- Add the ghee and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a firm dough.

1” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped: 5-6

Green chillies, finely chopped: 4-5

Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp

Ajwain (carom seeds): 1 tsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1 tsp

Masala from any mango pickle: 1 tbsp

Mustard oil: 1 tsp

Salt to taste

For the chokha

Medium-sized potatoes: 2-3

Small onion, peeled and very finely chopped: 1

Green chilli, finely chopped: 1

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1 tbsp

Mustard oil: ½ tsp

Lime juice: ½ tsp

Black salt (kala namak): to taste

For the tempering

Refined oil: 1 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chilli, roughly torn: 1

- Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

To prepare the filling

- Put all the ingredients in a bowl and mix with your fingers.
- Adjust the seasoning.

To make the littis

- Preheat the oven at 200°C.
- Knead the dough again for a few minutes.
- Make balls with the dough, slightly larger than golf balls.
- Make a well in the centre of each ball and place some filling inside. Cover the filling and seal well.
- Place the littis on a baking tray and bake in the centre of the preheated oven for 5-8 minutes, till they are golden brown.

To prepare the chokha

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and mash them in a bowl, while still hot.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the chokha and mash, till well combined.
- Adjust the seasoning.

To temper

- For an earthy flavour, I temper the chokha.
- Put the oil in a small pan over

moderate heat.

- Add the mustard seeds and the red chilli and let them crackle.
- Remove from heat and pour the contents of the pan over the chokha.

To serve

- Place the hot littis and chokha in two serving dishes.
- Enjoy the littis with the delicious chokha with melted ghee on the side.

PEETHA

Wheat Flour Dumplings stuffed with Bengal Gram

‘Peetha toh meri Nani banati hai,’ (No one, but only my grandmother can make Peetha.) Every time I make peetha at home, this is my husband’s first comment. His love for his grandmother’s peetha is undying and according to him no one can ever replicate it. To be very honest, I don’t blame him. Nani does make superb peetha. Actually, no matter how talented a chef you are, you can never match the magic of nani-and-dadi recipes. In my relentless effort to satisfy my husband’s craving for Nani’s peetha, I made a very serious effort to learn it step by step. While on one of our visits to her place, I took notes and urged her to tell me all her secrets. Once back home, I prepared it following her instructions. After a stringent review, my husband’s comment was, ‘You aren’t there yet, but very close.’ I was delighted.

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

For the filling

Husked, split Bengal gram (chana daal): 2 cups

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: 1” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 2-3

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 3-4

Cumin powder: 1 tsp

METHOD

To prepare the filling

- Soak the daal for at least two hours.
- Drain the daal and rinse it.
- Put the daal with the remaining ingredients for the filling in a mixer grinder and grind it, but not too fine, keep the mixture a little thick.
- Adjust the seasoning.

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

For the dough

Wheat flour: 3 cups

Salt: ½ tsp

Water: ½ cup

For the tempering

Refined oil: 1-2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: 2 tsp

Dried red chillies, broken into pieces: 3-4

Green chillies, chopped: 2-3

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a medium-soft dough.
- Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

To make the peetha

- Knead the dough again for a few minutes.
- Make balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls.
- Roll them into ½” thick discs.
- Place the delicious filling on one half of the centre of each disc.
- Moisten the edges with a little water and cover the filling with the other half to form a half moon.
- Press down firmly on the edges to seal.
- Fill a large pan with plenty of water and put it over high heat. Bring to a boil and add a pinch of salt.
- Add the peethas, a few at a time. Don’t overcrowd the pan.
- Cook for 5-7 minutes, it will start floating to the surface as soon as it is cooked.
- Drain and place them on a chopping board.
- Cut each peetha into 2-3 pieces.
- Repeat with the remaining

peethas.

To temper

- Put the oil in a large shallow frying pan or wok over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and chillies and let them crackle.
- Add the chopped peethas and sauté for 1-2 minutes.

To serve

- Transfer to a serving platter and enjoy a cold morning with hot peethas served with Dhania ki Chutney (Fresh Coriander Chutney: [p. 129](#)).

DHUSKA

Rice and Bengal Gram Pancakes

I first tasted Dhuska on my trip to Hazaribagh (in the southern part of Bihar, now Jharkhand). We had gone there for the Kul Devta puja, which is performed by newly-married couples in their ancestral homes in order to seek the blessings of their family deity and ancestors. I remember everything as if it were yesterday. I was a new bride among several elders, and there was so much of traditional food being passed around amongst guests. My younger sisters-in-law, Shrija, Shruti and Shubha, showered me with love and affection. Every now and then, I was served some delicious traditional food or the other. Amongst all the snacks that came my way, dhuska stood out. I absolutely loved it and wanted to eat more and more. But owing to my 'bridal shyness', I just couldn't ask for another piece. Later that day, when I shared my dhuska experience with my husband, he told me that it was his favourite too and he confessed how he had enjoyed eating six of them. I was jealous! But then, it was so super delicious that I was curious to learn how to make it on my own. So, here's my take on the almighty dhuska.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 2-3 minutes

INGREDIENTS

For the batter

Rice: 3 cups

Husked, split Bengal gram (chana daal): ½ cup

Garlic cloves, peeled and chopped: 2

METHOD

To make the batter

- Wash the rice and daal and soak them together for a minimum of 6-7 hours.
- Reserve ½ cup of the soaking liquid and drain out the rest.

Black peppercorns: 1 tsp
Ginger peeled and grated: 1 tsp
Green chillies, chopped: 1 tsp
Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1
tbsp
Cumin powder: ½ tsp
Garam masala powder: ½ tsp
Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
Salt: to taste

For frying the dhuska

Refined oil: to shallow-fry

- Put the rice and daal in a mixer grinder.
- Add the garlic, black peppercorns and the reserved water and grind to make a thick batter. You don't want a very smooth or liquid paste.
- Transfer the batter to a bowl and add the remaining ingredients for the batter. Mix, till well blended.

To fry the dhuska

- Put some oil in a frying pan over moderate heat.
- Pour in a ladle of batter and spread it out. Fry it on each side for 2-3 minutes, till it is a lovely golden colour.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.
- Make the remaining dhuskas in the same way.

To serve

- Arrange the dhuskas on a serving platter.
- Serve hot with Ghughni (Whole Bengal Gram Curry; [p. 56](#)), and any pickle of your choice.

DAAL PARATHA AUR AAMRAS

Flatbread stuffed with Bengal Gram, Served with Mango Purée

My phua saas (husband's aunt) is not just a superb cook, but also a very happy and energetic one. The first time she came to stay with us, she encouraged me to cook my specialities. After tasting my Italian and Mughlai dishes, she called me to the kitchen one morning and said, 'Aao dulhin, aaj humlog saath mein ék ispecial Bihari dish banaté hain,' (Come, we will make a special Bihari dish today).

And that special dish happened to be Daal Paratha. It was an absolute delight and a great learning curve for me to spend that wonderful time with her in the kitchen as her sous chef, and listening to stories about the bhansa ghar. Her childhood experiences, and those from her first few days of marriage, had a remarkable similarity to mine. And when I finally tasted the dish, I could feel it infused with all her love and warmth.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 4-5 minutes

Ingredients

For the filling

Husked, split Bengal gram (chana daal): 2 cups

Water: 4 cups

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Method

To prepare the filling

- Wash the daal and soak it in water overnight or for a minimum 4-5 hours.
- Drain the daal and rinse it.
- Cook the daal with the water,

Salt: to taste

Oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½ tsp

Green chillies, chopped: 2-3

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Medium-sized onions, peeled and chopped: 2

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 2 tbsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½ tsp

For the aamras

Alphonso mangoes: 2-3

Sugar: 2 tbsp

Milk: 4-5 tbsp

For the dough

Wheat flour: 4 cups + extra to dust

Salt: ½ tsp

Ghee: 2 tbsp

Water: ½ cup

To cook the parathas

Ghee: 4 tbsp

turmeric powder, red chilli powder and salt, in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5 minutes (1 whistle). Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.

- Drain the cooked daal completely; there should not be any water or moisture.
- Let it cool a little.
- Grind the daal in a grinder and transfer to a bowl.
- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds, ginger, green chillies and asafoetida. Sauté for 1 minute.
- Add the onions and a pinch of salt and sauté, till golden brown.
- Remove from heat and add the coriander leaves, garam masala powder and mango powder. Mix well.
- Spoon the contents of the pan into the ground daal.
- Mix well and adjust the seasoning. Your filling is ready.

To prepare the aamras

- Peel the mangoes and chop the flesh roughly.
- Put the mango flesh in a grinder with the remaining ingredients

for the aamras and grind, till it becomes a smoothie.

- Transfer to a serving bowl and set aside.

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Add the ghee and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a smooth pliable dough.
- Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

To make the parathas

- Knead the dough again for a few minutes.
- Make balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls.
- Dust a clean working surface with extra flour.
- Roll a dough ball into a ½” thick disc.
- Place about 2 tbsp of stuffing in the centre of the disc and with your fingers bring the edges together in order to cover the filling and make a ball.
- Dust the work surface lightly with flour and roll the stuffed ball into a round disc.
- Repeat with the remaining dough balls.

To cook the parathas

- Put a tava or griddle over moderate heat.
- Put a paratha on the tava and cook for 2 minutes.
- Flip it over and smear $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of ghee all over the paratha.
- Flip it again and smear $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of ghee on the other side.
- Cook for 2 minutes on each side, till you see brown spots on both sides.
- Your parathas are ready.

To serve

- Place the delicious stuffed parathas on a serving platter and enjoy them with sweet aamras.

TEHRI

Vegetable Pulao

‘Ok, hang on, take a bow, a chef is born!’ These are the exact words that came to my mind after my father-in-law tasted the Tehri that I’d made for the first time. ‘You should make this your signature dish,’ he said.

Tehri, which is commonly and regularly made in numerous households across Bihar and Jharkhand, has several levels of flavour. What I did special that day was that I added some of my chef skills and instead of cooking the rice in plain water, I cooked it in a vegetable broth. And that gave my tehri a new dimension of flavour.

Tehri is a traditional, wholesome, healthy meal and is best served with a homemade raita (curd-based salad). One thing to ensure while preparing tehri is that the vegetables should be cooked just right. Even if they are a little overdone, you won’t enjoy the flavours of the different vegetables; on the contrary, you end up with a vegetable mash which does not go well with the rice.

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

Basmati rice: 2 cups

For the tempering

Ghee: 2 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Method

- Wash the rice at least 2-3 times and soak it in water for a minimum of 20 minutes.

To temper

Black peppercorns: 4-5
Cinnamon: 1" stick
Large black cardamom pods: 2
Star anise (badian): 1
Cloves: 2-3

For the seasoning

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tbsp
Small onions, peeled and chopped: 2
Salt: to taste
Green chillies, slit: 2-3
Turmeric powder: 1 tsp
Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

For the vegetables

Shelled green peas: 200 g
Carrots, peeled and chopped: 100 g
Large potato, peeled and chopped; 1
Cauliflower, cut into florets: 100 g

To cook the pulao

Water: 4 cups

- Put the ghee in a heavy-based pan or wok over moderate heat.
- Add the whole spices and let them crackle.

To season

- Mix in the ginger-garlic paste and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the onions, season with a pinch of salt, and sauté, till they are golden brown.
- Add the green chillies and sauté for 1-2 minutes.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and mix well.

To cook the vegetables

- Add the vegetables and sauté for 4-5 minutes.
- Stir in 2 tbsp of water, cover the pan and cook for 4-5 minutes. Keep stirring in between.

To cook the rice

- Add the rice and toss for about 2 minutes. Adjust the seasoning.
- Pour in the water, mix gently, cover the pan and cook over low heat for 10-12 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon the pulao into a serving dish and serve hot with any raita, papad, chutney and pickle of your choice.

LAUKIWALI GEELI KHICHDI

Bottle Gourd Rice Porridge

Location: Sahay Household

Day & Time: Saturday afternoon

Dulhin: Maa, aaj khané mein kya banana hai?

Saasu Maa: Aaj Saturday hai, aaj toh khichdi hi banéga. Nahi toh tumharé Papa jo hain na, u aaké boléngé ki khichdi kahé nahi banayi?

Dulhin: Saturday ko khichdi hi kyun banti hai, Maa?

Saasu Maa: Beta, Bihar mein aisa mana jata hai ki Saturday ko khichdi khané sé jo buré grah hain woh kat jaaté hain.

Dulhin: Oh, achcha.

(Bride: What should we cook for lunch?)

Mother-in-law: On Saturdays, we only have khichdi for lunch, that's the tradition.

Bride: Why, Maa?

Mother-in-law: In Bihar, we believe that if you eat khichdi on Saturdays, it keeps the stars happy and in your favour.

Bride: Oh, ok!)

What makes Bihari khichdi different is that it's soupy, not dry and is made with husked, split green beans (moong daal) and husked, split Egyptian lentils (masoor daal).

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20-25 minutes

Ingredients

For the khichdi

Method

- Wash the rice and daals in

Rice: ½ cup

Husked, split Egyptian lentils
(masoor daal): ½ cup

Husked, split green beans (moong
daal): ½ cup

For the tempering

Refined oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely
chopped: 2-3

Green chillies, chopped: 1-2

Small onion, peeled and finely
chopped: 1

Medium-sized tomato, chopped: 1

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

The bottle gourd

Small bottle gourd (lauki), peeled
and chopped: 1

Water 4-4 ½ cups

To serve

Ghee: 1 tbsp

several changes of water. Drain
and set aside.

To temper

- Put the oil in a heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Mix in the ginger, garlic and green chillies and sauté for 1 minute.
- Add the onion and sauté, till pink.
- Stir in the tomato and, sauté, till they soften.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and salt, mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

To cook the khichdi

- Add the bottle gourd and cook for 3-4 minutes.
- Mix in the rice and daals.
- Pour in the water and mix gently.
- Cover the pan and cook over low heat for 15-20 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon the khichdi into a serving dish, add a dollop of ghee and serve hot with as many accompaniments as you like.
- In my home, khichdi is always accompanied with curd, pickles,

papad, Tillauri (Sun-dried
Sesame seed Fritters), Dahiwala
Murcha (Green Chillies Pickled
with Curd; [p. 126](#)) and
counting. . .

DAAL PITHORI

Lentil Broth with Wheat Flour Dumplings

Daal Pithori is not just a dish, it is a complete meal in itself. Here, the dough is cooked with the daal which makes it simple and quick. Honestly for me, it's a creatively improvized dish. When your kids' or guests' hungry faces stare at you, and you are a little under-stocked and too tired to prepare anything elaborate, daal pithori is the perfect answer!

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Wheat flour: 2 cups

Salt: to taste

Ghee: 1 tbsp

Water: 1 cup

For the daal

Husked, split pigeon peas (arhar/toor daal): 1 cup

Water: 2-2½ cups

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

For the tempering

Oil: 1 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl.
- Add the ghee and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a smooth dough.

To shape the pithori

- Divide the dough into two portions and shape into balls.
- With a rolling pin, roll out each ball into a ½" thick round disc.
- Cut the discs vertically into 1"

Large dried red chilli: 1

For the seasoning

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped: ½" piece

Garlic clove peeled and finely chopped: 1

Green chillies, chopped: 10

Small onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Small tomato, chopped: 1

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

To serve

Ghee: ½ tbsp

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 2 tbsp

wide strips.

- Cut the strips into 1" squares.

To cook the daal

- Wash the daal and drain.
- Cook the daal with the water, turmeric powder, salt and dough squares in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5 minutes (1 whistle). Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.

To temper

- Put the oil in a heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds and red chilli and let them crackle.

To season

- Mix in the ginger, garlic and green chillies and sauté for 1 minute.
- Stir in the onion and sauté, till pink.
- Add the tomato and sauté, till it softens.
- Sprinkle in the chilli powder and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Pour in the cooked daal and simmer for 2 minutes.
- Adjust the seasoning.

To serve

- Spoon the daal into a serving dish, add a dollop of ghee and sprinkle with coriander leaves.
- Serve hot.

DAHI BADA

Lentil Fritters Served with Curd and Chutney

Dahi Badas are crowd-pullers all across India. Bihar and Jharkhand are no different. My mother-in-law makes them especially for her kitty parties. Here is my take on this wonderful all-time favourite.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the badas

Husked, split black beans (urad daal): 2 cups
Black peppercorns: 1 tsp
Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2-3
Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: 1" piece
Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch
Salt: to taste
Water: ½ cup

For frying the badas

Oil: to deep-fry

For each serving

Whisked curd: ½ cup
Imli ki Chutney (Tamarind Chutney; [p. 132](#)): 1 tbsp

Method

To make the batter for the badas

- Wash the daal 2-3 times. Soak it in water for a minimum of 5-6 hours.
- Drain the daal and rinse it.
- Put the daal into a grinder with the remaining ingredients for the badas and grind to make a smooth paste.
- Transfer to a bowl.

To fry the badas

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add a tablespoon of the batter at a time into the hot oil and fry the badas in batches, till golden. Toss periodically.

Cumin powder: ¼ tsp

Chaat masala powder: a pinch

Red chilli powder: a pinch

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: ½ tsp

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To complete the dish

- Soak the badas in warm water for 18-20 mins.
- Gently squeeze them to drain off excess water.

To serve

- Arrange two badas in each of 3-4 small bowls.
- Pour the whisked curd over them and dot with the tamarind chutney.
- Sprinkle the spice powders and coriander leaves on top and serve.

DAHI CHOORA GUD

Flaky Rice with Curd and Jaggery

Dahi Choora Gud is like the ‘cornflakes of Bihar’. It is almost everyone’s favourite breakfast cereal mix. It’s easy to digest, healthy and wholesome – full of carbohydrates, protein and other essential nutrients. To me, it’s a beautiful way to kick-start your day with the warmth and natural sweetness of jaggery. It also has a festive significance, as it is considered auspicious to eat it during the festival of Makar Sankranti.

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 4-5 minutes

Ingredients

Flaky rice (choora/poha): 1 cup
Whisked curd: 1½ cups
Grated jaggery (gud): 1 tbsp

Method

- Wash the rice and drain it.
- Put it into a bowl.
- Add the curd and jaggery and mix well.
- Spoon into a serving dish and it is ready to eat.

SATTU KI KACHODI

Fritters stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour

Sattu in a Bhojpuri kitchen is as readily available as coconut is in many Kerala households. They are absolutely inseparable. No wonder that its abundance has given birth to several wonderful dishes. One of my family's hot favourites is this recipe.

Sattu in Bihar is made from roasted Bengal gram. Made like pooris, the dough is stuffed with sattu and then deep-fried, till golden brown. This dish is the main feature of many festive meals. It is also easy to digest and light on the stomach. If you prepare it as regularly as I do, you may also attempt to bake it in the oven.

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 2-3 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Wheat flour: 2 cups + extra to dust

Salt: ½ tsp

Ghee: 2 tbsp

Water: ½ cup

For the filling

Sattu (roasted gram flour): 2 cups

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped:
½" piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Add the ghee and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a soft, pliable dough.
- Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

chopped: 5-6

Green chillies, finely chopped: 3-4

Fresh coriander leaves, finely
chopped: 1 tbsp

Ajwain: 1 tsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1
tsp

Mustard oil: 1 tbsp

Salt: to taste

For frying the kachodis

Refined oil: to deep-fry

To prepare the filling

- Put all the ingredients for the filling in a bowl and mix with your fingers.
- Adjust the seasoning.

To prepare the kachodis

- Knead the dough again for a few minutes.
- Make balls with the dough, slightly larger than golf balls.
- Make a well in the centre of a ball. Put a tablespoon of filling in the well, cover with the dough and seal the filling inside.
- Roll it between your palms to make a smooth ball.
- Dust the work surface with a little flour, and using a rolling pin, roll the stuffed ball into a disc.

To fry the kachodis

- Put the oil in a wok over high heat and add the kachodis in batches. Lower the heat and fry for 2 minutes on each side, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.
- Arrange the kachodis on a serving platter and serve hot with Imli ki Chutney (Tamarind Chutney; [p. 132](#)).

Variations

Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour): Prepare the dough and filling as given above. Make the parathas and cook them as given in Daal Paratha Aur Aamras (Flatbread stuffed with Bengal Gram, Served with Mango Purée; [p. 10](#)).

Baked Kachodis: Brush both sides of the kachodis with a little oil and place them on a baking tray lined with baking parchment. Put the tray inside an oven preheated to 180°C. Bake for 5-6 minutes, turn over and bake for another 5-6 minutes.

THE FESTIVALS OF BIHAR

Much like the rest of India, festivals are important days in the calendar of Bihar and bring out the culinary expanse of the state in its fullest glory. In this section, I shall describe the important festivals of Bihar and their culinary significance.

Biharis love their festivals for the food that is served, for the messages they carry, and for the endless possibilities they offer for tasting the best cuisine from across the region and then experimenting with them, like I did in my life. My husband sometimes finds visiting distant relatives during these festivities tedious and monotonous. But I have a field day. After the usual pranam-paati (greeting of elders), I invariably go to the kitchen to participate in the cooking, while keenly taking note of the cooking techniques employed by the women of the household. It is really beautiful to observe how they prepare their traditional food with their own little variations.

CHHATH: AN OBEISANCE TO THE SUN GOD

Daura mathua pé uthaiyé pintu ké papa, chali ab ghaat chali.

(Dear husband, let's carry all the holy dishes prepared for today's prayers, and proceed to the banks of the holy river.)

When you hear such songs sung in almost every street, and watch people dressed in colourful traditional clothes, the women resplendent in their jewellery, even as homes are decorated in full splendour, then you truly understand the spirit of Bihar as it readies itself to celebrate its grandest festival, Chhath.

Chhath is beyond doubt the most awaited festival of Bihar and Jharkhand. It's also celebrated with equal fervour in eastern Uttar Pradesh, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Nepal. During the four-day festivities, families, distant relatives and neighbours come together to pay their respects to Suryadev and Chhathi Maiya (the Sun God and His consort). It is a strongly held belief amongst some people of Bihar that worshipping Chhathi Maiya with complete devotion ensures Her blessings for health, happiness and prosperity – *Araghwa ké bera bhai poori hoiyé aswaa* (All your wishes will come true during the evening prayers to the Sun God).

Chhath is probably the only festival in India where there is a direct connect between the worshipper and the worshipped. There are no intermediaries – no Brahmin is required to chant mantras on your behalf, or even guide you through each step of the puja. Moreover, it is a wonderful community festival— people come forward to help each other through these very tough four days, which includes fasting for over thirty-six hours without even a drop of water! The rules being extremely stringent — people performing the puja are mandated to sleep and eat in a secluded place, away even from other members of the family. In fact, even their food is cooked on a separate gas stove that is bought especially for this occasion, or best, on the traditional wood-fired one. It is believed that while doing the sunrise and sunset aragh (offerings to the Sun God), the devotee performing the puja is at her most pious self and being in her presence is like being in the presence of God. It is therefore no wonder that one often sees even little children waking up at 3 a.m. to reach the ghats before sunrise, in order to participate in the

morning aragh.

However, visiting the ghats serves several purposes, and is not just limited to the religious part of the festival. Even as an entire city descends on a single spot in the spirit of festivity, the ghats turn into a meeting place to bond with old friends and make new ones! I was familiar with the festival of Chhath since childhood, as many Bihari migrants in my hometown of Bhopal, celebrated it with gusto. Little did I know then that it would become such an important part of my life after my marriage. For me, the highlight of the festival is when everyone sits together to prepare the prasad (offerings to the gods), while singing folk songs — my favourite being, ‘*U jé kerva jé pharela khabad sé, oh pé suga medhrayé*’ (The birds are eating the holy dishes, I must protect them to ensure that the rituals are held in the most pious manner and the food for the Lord remains pristine.)

Certain specific food items are prepared and served during Chhath. Thekua (Sweet Wheat Flour Fritters; [p. 152](#)), Khajuria (similar to Thekua, but moon-shaped), Chawal ka Kheer (the pan-Indian and traditional rice pudding), Baingan Badi ki Sabji (Aubergine Curry with Black Gram Cakes; [p. 62](#)), Kohré ki Sabji (sautéed pumpkin curry; also see, Kohra Sarson ké Latpat Sabji or Pumpkin in a Thick Mustard Gravy; [p. 66](#)) and Gobhi ki Sabji (cauliflower sautéed curry) are some of the more delicious dishes that are made at home. During my first Chhath, it fell on me to prepare these dishes in a pristine environment and true to the original recipes, under the very watchful eyes of the elders. With a little help from the chachis and bhabhis, fortunately everything came together quite well. So much so that my chacha sasur (father-in-law’s brother) said, ‘*Baah ré, Pallabhi, tum toh khoob kamaal kar di. Pahilé hi Chhath mein baaji maar li*’ (Well done, Pallavi! Kudos to you on performing all the prescribed duties perfectly, that too on your very first Chhath.)

* * *

HOLI AND DIWALI

While Holi is the festival of colours, it is also a festival of food. On the day of Holika Dahan, Makhané ki Kheer (Foxnut Porridge; [p. 147](#)) and poori are

prepared as an offering to the holy fire. On the next day, the day of Holi, the main course must include Dhuska (Rice and Bengal Gram Pancakes; [p. 8](#)) with Bihari Halwai-style Mutton (Spicy Mutton Curry; [p. 86](#)) and Dahi Bada (Lentil Fritters Served with Curd and Chutney; [p. 19](#)), with Maal Pua (Sweet Pancakes; [p. 156](#)) for dessert. The other popular snacks during Holi are Nimkee (Savoury Pastry Sticks; [p. 51](#)) and Khurma (Sugar-glazed Pastry; [p. 158](#)), which are served to even complete strangers participating in the festival.

Diwali on the other hand, is strictly celebrated with vegetarian delicacies like Daal Bharé Poori (see, Daal Paratha aur Aamras, Flatbread stuffed with Bengal Gram, Served with Mango Puree; [p. 10](#)), Gobhi Mattar ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Cauliflower and Green Peas; [p. 100](#)), Kohra Sarson ké Latpat Sabji (Pumpkin in a Thick Mustard Gravy; [p. 66](#)) etc.

Since Diwali is a festival which celebrates prosperity, several delectable sweets form part of the menu, such as Pedakiya (Stuffed Sweet Dumplings; [p. 154](#)), Parwal ki Mithai (Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd; [p. 140](#)), Kaala Jamun (Cottage Cheese Dumplings in Sugar Syrup; [p. 150](#)), Boondi ké Laddoo (Gram Flour Sweet; [p. 163](#)), and Balushahi (Sugar-glazed Doughnuts; [p. 145](#)) among others.

* * *

TEEJ AND BADH PUJA

Two other popular festivals of Bihar and Jharkhand are Haritalika Teej and Vat Savitri (or Badh Puja). These two festivals hold a special place in my heart as they signify the very foundations of a married life—occasions when women pray for the wellbeing of their husbands.

But somehow for me, it is more than just about my husband. I believe that while other festivals are generally about the victory of good over evil, or light over darkness, these two are more about building an edifice of a strong family. For any family to succeed, it is imperative that the woman of the house takes centre stage. In my view, both these festivals are celebrations of a woman's inherent strength and her ability to withstand all adversities when it comes to protecting her family. During Badh Puja, the banyan tree is

worshipped as a symbol of the deep-rooted love and affection that a woman has for her husband and his entire family. Being an outdoor puja, it further adds to the colours of the festivities — married women of all ages, gorgeously dressed in saris, *maangtika* (bridal hair pendant) and *nathia* (bridal nose-ring) come out of their homes to pray together to the banyan tree. Beautiful young brides try to match their mothers-in-law's steps, as the more experienced ones, relive their first Badh Puja. You can also spot a few young girls keenly observing their mothers, elder sisters and aunts performing the puja. With every round of the banyan tree that these married women take, you can almost hear the young ones whispering a few prayers to Savitri for granting them their dream match. Isn't this what festivals are all about? Wishing and praying for a beautiful tomorrow!

However, food forms an important part of both these festivals, although they involve rigorous fasts, especially Teej. Sargih is a meal which is eaten before commencing the fasts for Teej. In our family, sargih usually includes Chéné ka Rasgulla (Cottage cheese Dumplings Dipped in sugar syrup), and cucumber. Pedakiya and Khajuria serve as prasad for the evening prayers, which are only eaten after breaking the fast the next day, along with Kadhi Badi (Curd Curry with Gram Flour Dumplings; [p. 74](#)), rice, and Neembu ka Sharbat (Fresh Lime Sharbat, commonly made as a summer cooler across India). During Badh Puja, Thekuas are also served as prasad, while Ghughni (Whole Bengal Gram Curry; [p. 56](#)) and Palak ka Saag (Sauteed Spinach; also see, Saag Chana {Spinach with Bengal Gram} [p. 112](#)) which are eaten with rice to break the fast after the puja.

* * *

DURGA PUJA

Durga Puja is the main festival of Bengal, but it is also celebrated with great enthusiasm in Bihar and Jharkhand. During the festival, you find beautiful, giant pandals (marquees) and food stalls along every street. The food during the first nine days of festivities, as opposed to Bengal, is strictly vegetarian. But on Vijayadashmi, the tenth day after the ritual immersion of the Goddess, there is an elaborate non-vegetarian lunch. Masala chicken and mustard fish

curry coupled with poori, kachodi (stuffed fritters), papad, chutneys, pickles and Kaala Jamun (Cottage Cheese Dumplings in Sugar Syrup; [p. 150](#)) are the hallmark of a typical Dashmi lunch in Bihar.

* * *

MAKAR SANKRANTI

India being a predominantly agrarian society, the festival of Makar Sankranti celebrates the harvest season across India. Til (sesame seed) is the most significant grain during the festival and several food items containing it, such as Til ké Laddoo or tilkut (Sesame Seed and Jaggery Sweet; [p. 148](#)), Til Patti (Sesame Seed Brittle) are prepared for the occasion. Additionally, Badam Patti (Peanut Brittle), Dahi Choorā Gud (Flaky Rice with Curd and Jaggery; [p. 20](#)) and Lai ka Laddoo (sweet made of puffed rice and jaggery) are also popular dishes that people enjoy during Makar Sankranti.

SUMPTUOUS SNACKS

The depth of any cuisine can be easily judged by the number of eating slots it can fill in a day. Whatever your food habits, almost everybody I know, loves in-between snacking.

There is something therapeutic about munching that makes snacks such an integral part of our lifestyle. I once read in a health journal that most of us like to munch while doing a mentally-challenging task. These small food items act as an incentive for a tired mind and body, and reinvigorate us in no time. Apart from providing energy, vibrant colourful food also helps us to innovate and think better. Therefore, munching is in some ways a necessary distraction.

The Bhojpuri kitchen offers a plethora of such dishes and can be the stimulus that one so badly needs to break the monotonous hours of sitting in front of a computer screen. The other good thing about these quick fixes is that they are great to serve to guests; easy to prepare and perfect for an afternoon of gossiping with friends over tea or coffee. Somehow, these traditional recipes always have a feel-good factor, which are hard to match the off-the-shelf and readymade snacks.



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SINGHADA
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PAPRA

Gram Flour Crêpes

Papra can also be called instant Besan Dosa (Gram Flour Crêpes). According to my mother-in-law, this recipe must have been devised by someone as a quick fix to feed unannounced guests! It's an easy-peasy recipe – chopped onions, green chillies and coriander are added to a liquid batter of gram flour and water, which is then cooked on a flat pan, just like a dosa or crêpe.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 3-4 minutes

Ingredients

For the tempering

Oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Ginger, peeled and grated: 1 tsp

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Green chilli, finely chopped: 1

Small onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Shelled green peas: 1 tbsp

Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp

Method

To temper

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Stir in the ginger, garlic, and green chilli and sauté, till the raw smell of the garlic disappears, which should take around 2 minutes.
- Add the onion and salt and sauté, till golden brown.
- Toss in the green peas and

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

For the batter

Gram flour: 1 cup

Water: 4 tbsp

To cook the papras

Oil: to grease the pan

sauté, till cooked.

- Remove from heat and set aside.

To make the batter

- Sift the gram flour into a bowl.
- Pour the contents of the pan over the gram flour, along with the coriander leaves and chilli powder.
- Mix well and add more salt.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking to make a batter of medium-thick pouring consistency. Add a little more water if required. You don't want it to be too liquid or too thick. It should have the consistency of a dosa or crêpe batter.

To cook the papras

- Put a flat pan over low heat.
- Grease it lightly with oil and pour in a ladle of batter.
- Spread the batter with the ladle and cook for 2-3 minutes.
- Flip it over and cook again for 2-3 minutes.
- Make the remaining papras in the same way.

To serve

- Arrange the papras on a serving platter and serve hot with any pickles and chutneys of your choice.

BACHKA

Bengal Gram Fritters

Biharis love their daals and chana, and cannot resist innovating with them. One such preparation is Bachka. It's basically a chana pakoda served with a green chutney. Bachka is probably one of the most favourite dishes of the region.

Just let any Bihari know that you are making bachka, and you are sure to have company during snack time! Trust me, I learnt this the hard way when I once inadvertently told one of my husband's cousins that I was trying out bachka that evening. To my surprise, she showed up and didn't shy away from inviting a couple of her other friends as well!

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the gram

Whole Bengal gram (kala chana): 1 cup

Water: 4 cups

Salt: a pinch

For the batter

Gram flour (besan): 1 cup

Salt: to taste

Water: 2/3 cup or as required

For the tempering

Method

To cook the gram

- Wash the gram and soak it in water for a minimum of 4-5 hours.
- Drain and rinse it.
- Cook the gram with the water and a pinch of salt in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5-10

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Green chilli, finely chopped: 1

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

Small onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Fresh coriander leaves, finely
chopped: 2 tbsp

For frying the bachkas

Oil: to deep-fry

To serve

Chaat masala powder: to sprinkle

minutes (1-2 whistles). Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.

- Drain it completely, with the help of a colander and let it cool for 5-10 minutes.

To prepare the batter

- Sift the gram flour and salt into a bowl.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking, to make a batter of medium coating consistency.

To temper

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the ingredients for the seasoning, except the onion and coriander leaves and sauté for 1 minute.
- Pour the contents of the pan into the batter and mix well.
- To complete the bachka batter
- Add the cooled gram along with the onion and coriander leaves.
- Mix well and adjust the seasoning.

To fry the bachkas

- With the help of two spoons, drop the batter into the hot oil to make 2"- 3" round bachkas.

- Fry in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Sprinkle some chaat masala powder over the bachkas and transfer to a serving platter.
- Serve hot with an assortment of chutneys.

BHABHRA

Bengal Gram Pancakes

Bhabhra is yet another innovative dish made with Bengal gram. It is actually an instant pancake made with soaked whole Bengal gram and gram flour. It is rich in protein and fibre.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 3-4 minutes

Ingredients

For the batter

Whole Bengal gram (kala chana): ½ cup

Gram flour (besan): 1 cup

Semolina (sooji): ½ cup

Ginger, peeled and grated: 1 tsp

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp

Green chillies, finely chopped: 1 tsp

Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Cumin powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

Method

To make the batter

- Wash the gram and soak it in water overnight.
- Drain and rinse well.
- Put the gram in a large bowl.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the batter, except the water and mix well.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking to make a thick batter. Adjust the seasoning.

To cook the bhabhras

- Put 1 tbsp of mustard oil in a shallow pan over low heat.
- Add a ladle of batter into the pan and spread it out with the ladle.

Water 2-3 tbsp

To cook the bhabhras

Mustard oil: to grease the pan

- Cook for 3-4 minutes, then flip it over and cook the other side for 2-3 minutes.
- Make the remaining bhabhras in the same way.

To serve

- Transfer to a serving platter and serve hot with any mango pickle and adraki chai (spiced ginger tea).

BREAD PAKODA

Bread Fritters

I have tasted several versions of this snack in almost every home in Bihar and Jharkhand. But this is my version!

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 25 minutes

Cooking time: 2-3 minutes

Ingredients

For the filling

Medium-sized potatoes: 3-4

Shelled green peas: ½ cup

For the tempering

Oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½ tsp

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Green chillies, finely chopped: 1-2

Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Method

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and mash them in a bowl while still hot. Set aside.
- Boil the green peas, till tender. Set aside.

To temper

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the ginger and garlic and sauté for 1-2 minutes.
- Sprinkle in the green chillies, turmeric powder, chilli powder, coriander powder and garam

Salt: to taste

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½ tsp

For the batter

Gram flour (besan): 1 cup

Water: ¼-½ cup

Salt: to taste

For the pakodas

Bread slices: 6

For frying the pakodas

Oil: to deep-fry

masala powder and sauté for another minute.

- Add the onion with a pinch of salt and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the mashed potatoes and green peas and mix, till well blended.
- Adjust the seasoning and add the mango powder. Mix well again. The stuffing is ready.

To prepare the batter

- Sift the gram flour and salt into a large bowl.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking, to make a batter of coating consistency.

To make the pakodas

- Spread the potato stuffing over 3 bread slices. Cover with the other 3 slices.
- Place the sandwiches on a chopping board and cut each into 2 triangles.

To fry the pakodas

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Dip the sandwiched bread triangles in the batter and deep-fry them in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Arrange the pakodas on a

serving platter and serve hot
with Pudina Aur Dhania ki
Chutney (Fresh Mint and
Coriander Chutney; [p 129](#)).

VEGETABLE PAKODA

Vegetable Fritters

Serves: 2-4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Ingredients

For the batter

Gram flour (besan): 1 cup

Salt: to taste

Water: 2/3 cup or as required

For the seasoning

Green chillies, finely chopped: 1

Fresh coriander leaves, finely
chopped: 2 tbsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

For bottle gourd (lauki) pakodas

Bottle gourd: ½

For potato pakodas

Medium-sized potatoes: 2-3

Ajwain: ½ tsp

For aubergine (baingan) pakodas

Small aubergines: 3-4

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

For frying the pakodas

Oil: to deep-fry

To serve

Method

To prepare the batter

- Sift the gram flour and salt into a large bowl.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking to make a batter of medium or coating consistency.
- Add the seasonings and mix well.

To prepare the vegetables

- Wash the vegetables thoroughly.
- Peel the bottle gourd and potatoes and cut into thin round slices.
- Cut the aubergines into thin round slices without peeling them.
- Add the ajwain to the batter for potato pakodas.
- Dissolve the asafoetida in a little water and add it to the

Chaat masala powder: to sprinkle

Tip

While making pakodas, coat the vegetables lightly with the batter. If it is too thick, the pakodas won't turn out crisp.

batter for aubergine pakodas.
Mix well.

To fry the pakodas

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Dip the vegetable slices in the batter and fry them in batches, till golden brown on both sides.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Transfer the pakodas to a serving platter and serve hot sprinkled with chaat masala powder.

SEHJAN KÉ PHOOL KÉ PAKODÉ

Drumstick Flower Fritters

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 105 minutes

Ingredients

For the flowers

Drumsticks flowers: 100 g

Small onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Fresh coriander leaves, finely
chopped: 2 tbsp

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Green chillies, chopped: 1-2

Red chilli powder: ¼ tsp

Salt: to taste

For the batter

Gram flour (besan): 100 g

Water: ¼ cup or as required

For frying the pakodas

Oil: to deep-fry

Method

To prepare the flowers

- Rinse the drumstick flowers and drain. If required, pat dry.
- Put all the ingredients for the flowers in a bowl and mix well with your hands.

To prepare the batter

- Sift the gram flour into another bowl.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking to make a thick batter.
- Add the flowers and mix well. Adjust the seasoning.

To fry the pakodas

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Drop teaspoonfuls of the pakoda mix into the hot oil and fry them in batches, till golden brown on both sides.

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.
- Transfer to a serving platter and serve hot sprinkled with Dhania ki Chutney (Fresh Coriander Chutney; [p. 129](#)).

SATTU KA NAMKEEN SHARBAT

Roasted Gram Flour Sharbat

The thought of drinking a savoury sharbat, that too made with sattu, gave me a weird feeling the first time. Especially coming from Madhya Pradesh, where there's only one way to eat sattu and that is to dissolve it in sugar and milk. But then I noticed my father-in-law drinking this savoury sharbat every morning and that's when I figured out the reason behind his glowing skin and thick hair. Sattu is full of proteins and fibre, and works wonders on senior citizens. It's of course superb as a post workout shake as well.

Serves: 1

Preparation time: 2 minutes

Ingredients

Roasted gram flour (sattu): 2 tbsp
Cold water: 1 cup
Black salt (kala namak): ½ tsp
Cumin powder: ¼ tsp
Lime juice: 1 tbsp

Method

- Put everything into a glass, mix well and it's ready.

CHOORA MATTAR

Flaky Rice with Green Peas

Evenings in Bihar and Jharkhand are synonymous with Choorā Mattar. A quick and tasty snack with your evening tea or coffee, it is savoured by people of all ages. The preparation may differ a little from one household to another — some may add more spices and others may keep it simple — but in essence, the dish is prepared in the same manner across the region.

On my first trip to Bihar, I remember visiting several relatives in late afternoon and evenings and at every home, I was served a delicious offering of choora mattar. I particularly loved Minni Aunty's (my mother-in-law's best friend) version of choora mattar. My mother-in-law is rather health conscious, so she doesn't deep-fry the choora. She roasts it in a microwave oven or a shallow pan and I thought this was how it was supposed to be. But then I tasted Minni Aunty's choora which was fried to perfection, and the mattar was cooked in the choicest blend of spices. It was truly amazing. This is a recipe, inspired by her.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the green peas

Oil: 2 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Green chillies, chopped: 2

Small onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Method

To cook the green peas

- Put the oil in a shallow pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds, green chillies and onion and sauté, till the onion turns pink.

Salt: to taste

Red chilli powder: ¼ tsp

Shelled green peas: ½ cup

Lime juice: 1 tbsp

For the flaky rice

Oil: 1 cup

Flaky rice (poha/choora): 1 cup

Tip

Inspired by a distinguished Indian chef, I put the rice in a steel strainer and dip the strainer into the hot oil, till the rice is crisp. I then remove the strainer from the oil. This ensures that all the rice flakes are put in and removed at the same time and saves the flakes from getting burnt.

To serve

- Transfer to a serving platter and serve hot with any mango pickle and adraki chai (spiced ginger tea).

- Sprinkle in the salt and chilli powder and sauté for 1 minute.
- Add the green peas and cook for 3-4 minutes.
- Remove from heat and pour in the lime juice.
- Mix well and adjust the seasoning.

To fry the flaky rice

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the rice and fry, till crisp.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To complete the dish

- Add the fried rice to the green peas and mix well. Your delicious choora mattar is ready.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve immediately. Enjoy with a hot cup of cardamom tea.

CHOORA MATTAR KÉ CUTLET

Flaky Rice and Green Pea Fritters

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the cutlets

Medium-sized potatoes: 2

Flaky rice (poha/choora): 100 g

Shelled green peas: 3-4 tbsp

Small onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 2

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2

Lime juice: 1 lime

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1 tbsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Rock salt (lahori namak): ½ tsp

For the batter

Refined flour (maida): 2-3 tbsp

Salt: a pinch

Water: 3 tbsp

For the coating

Dried breadcrumbs: 4-5 tbsp

Method

To make the cutlet mix

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and mash them to a smooth paste while still hot. There should be no lumps. Set aside in a bowl.
- Wash the rice and drain thoroughly.
- Add the rice to the potatoes and mix well.
- Boil the green peas for 3-4 minutes, till tender.
- Drain, transfer to a small bowl and mash them roughly. Stir them into the rice and potatoes.
- Grind the ginger, garlic and green chillies to a smooth paste and mix it into the rice and potatoes.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the cutlets and mix, till well blended.

For frying the cutlets

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

- Adjust the seasoning. Your cutlet mix is ready.

To make the batter

- Sift the flour into a bowl with the salt.
- Add a little water at a time, while whisking to make a batter of coating consistency.

To form the cutlets

- With your hands, shape the cutlet mix into balls about the size of golf balls. Flatten them to make 2½” cutlets.
- Spread the breadcrumbs in a platter.
- Dip the cutlets into the batter and then coat them evenly with the breadcrumbs.

To fry the cutlets

- Put the oil in a shallow frying pan over moderate heat.
- Fry the cutlets in batches, till golden brown on both sides.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Arrange the cutlets on a serving platter and enjoy with Imli ki Chutney (Tamarind Chutney: [p. 132](#)) and cardamom tea.

CHLOORÉ KA PULAO

Flaky Rice Pulao with Vegetables

Chooré ka Pulao is different from the poha which is commonly made in the rest of India. It uses many vegetables and whole spices. Just to keep it healthier, I dry-roast the peanuts over low heat in a shallow pan instead of deep-frying them.

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Peanuts: ½ cup

For the tempering

Oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Black peppercorns: 3-4

Green cardamom pods: 2

For the seasoning

Green chillies, finely chopped: 1-2

Medium-sized onion, peeled and chopped: 1

For the vegetables and flaky rice

Small potato, peeled and diced: 1

Salt: to taste

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Medium-sized green capsicum,

Method

To dry-roast the peanuts

- Put a shallow pan over moderate heat. Add the peanuts, lower the heat and roast them for 5-7 minutes.
- Remove from heat and transfer to a plate. Set aside, till cool.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds, black peppercorns and cardamom pods and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the green chillies and sauté

diced: 1

Cauliflower florets, chopped: a few

Shelled green peas: ½ cup

Flaky rice (choora/poha): 1 cup

To serve

Lime juice: 2 tbsp

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1
tbsp

for 1 minute.

- Add the onion and sauté, till pink.

To cook the vegetables and flaky rice

- Add the potatoes with the salt and sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Sprinkle in the red chilli powder. Mix well.
- Mix in the remaining vegetables and sauté, till all the vegetables are tender.
- Rinse the choora, drain well and add it to the pan. Mix well.

To complete the dish

- Stir in the roasted peanuts and lime juice.

To serve

- Transfer to a serving dish, garnish with the coriander leaves and serve hot.

SINGHADA

Potato-Stuffed Pastries

Singhada or samosa is one of the most popular snacks in Bihar. Much like every shop which sells its own version of this wonderful savoury, every household also has its own special blend of spices for singhada, which they rarely share with others. The singhadas of Bihar are slightly different from the samosas sold in north India. They are a lot spicier and contain roasted peanuts, along with the traditional potato filling. My family's favourite singhadas are sold in the Gosain Tola area of Patna. So in order to please them, I figured out this recipe after tasting the famous singhadas from a shop in that area.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 3-4 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 2 cups

Salt: ½ tsp

Oil: 4 tbsp

Water: ½ cup

For the spice blend

Coriander seeds: 1 tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Black peppercorns: 2-3

Green cardamom pod: 1

Cinnamon: ¼" stick

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Add the oil and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a soft, pliable dough.
- Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

To make the spice blend

Large black cardamom pod: 1

Fennel seeds (saunf): ½ tsp

For the filling

Medium-sized potatoes: 2-3

Oil: 2 tbsp

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped:
½ tsp

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: ½
tsp

Medium-sized onion, peeled and
finely chopped: 1

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Shelled green peas: ¼ cup

Salt: to taste

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½
tsp

Roasted peanuts: ½ cup

For frying the singhadas

Oil: to deep-fry

- Mix all the spices together in a bowl.
- Put a shallow pan over low heat. Add the whole spices and roast, tossing all the while, for 3-4 minutes, till fragrant.
- Remove from heat and once they cool down, grind to make a fine powder.

To prepare the filling

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and mash them in a bowl, while still hot.
- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the ginger and garlic and sauté for 1 minute.
- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, red chilli powder and coriander powder and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the green peas and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Stir in 1 heaped tsp of the prepared spice powder.
- Add the mashed potatoes, salt, mango powder and peanuts and mix, till well blended.
- Remove from heat and set aside to cool slightly.

To assemble the singhadas

- Knead the dough again for a

few minutes.

- Shape the dough into balls, slightly smaller than golf balls.
- Roll each ball into a round disc. Cut each disc into half with a knife.
- Fold one half into a cone. With your finger, apply a little water along the edges of the folded cone and press to seal.
- Put a tablespoon of filling inside the cone.
- Moisten the top edges of the cone and cover the filling by closing the flap on top. Press the edges to seal well.
- Assemble the remaining singhadas in the same way.

To fry the singhadas

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Deep-fry the singhadas in batches, till golden brown on all sides.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Arrange the singhadas on a serving platter and serve hot with Imli ki Chutney (Tamarind Chutney; [p. 132](#)) or any green chutney.

KACHCHÉ KELÉ KÉ CUTLETS

Banana Cutlets

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the cutlets

Green cooking bananas (kachché kelé): 3-4

Gram flour (besan): 2 tbsp

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 2-3

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1 tbsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Rock salt (Lahori namak): ½ tsp

For frying the cutlets

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

Method

To make the cutlets

- Wash the bananas and put them in a pan with ¼ cup of water and steam them for 3-4 minutes.
- Drain and set aside to cool.
- Peel the bananas, put them into a bowl, chop them roughly and mash thoroughly.
- Grind the ginger, garlic and green chillies to a fine paste.
- Add the paste to the bowl with the remaining ingredients for the cutlets.
- Mix well and adjust the seasoning. Your cutlet mix is ready.
- With your hands, shape the cutlet mix into balls about the size of golf balls.
- Flatten them to make 2½” round cutlets.

To fry the cutlets

- Put the oil in a shallow frying pan over moderate heat.
- Shallow-fry the cutlets in batches, till golden brown on both sides.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Arrange the cutlets on a serving platter and enjoy them hot with cardamom tea.

NIMKEE

Savoury Pastry Sticks

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 2 cups

Salt: to taste

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): 1 tsp

Oil or shortening: 5-6 tbsp

Water: ½ cup

For frying the nimkee

Oil: to deep-fry

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a bowl.
- Mix in the nigella seeds and oil with your hands.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a dough, which is neither too soft or too hard.
- Cut the dough in two equal parts and shape each into a ball.
- Roll each ball into a ½” thick round disc.
- Cut the discs vertically to make ½” strips.
- Then cut them horizontally to make 2” long pieces.

To fry the nimkees

- Put the oil in a wok over low heat.
- Deep-fry the nimkees in batches, till golden brown.

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To serve

- Store in an airtight jar and snack on them as you like.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BIHARI CURRIES



GHUGHNI

Whole Bengal Gram Curry

CHANA DAAL DHOKA KÉ SABJI

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SPICY BIHARI KABABS



GHUGHNI

Whole Bengal Gram Curry

Ghughni is the most famous and traditional curry from Bihar. When I first heard the name, I thought they were talking about a folk dance! I could never imagine that it was the name of a curry! Even now, whenever I talk about it, I can actually see people dressed in colourful clothes, dancing in set patterns! Truth be told, ghughni is indeed vibrant, flavourful and delicious, showcasing the great traditional flavours of Bihar in just a single bite.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

Whole Bengal gram (kala chana): 1 cup

For the tempering

Sunflower oil: 2 tbsp

Green cardamom pods: 2

Black cardamom pod: 1

Cinnamon: ½" stick

Black peppercorns: 4-5

Cloves: 2

Small bay leaf (tej patta): 1

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Dried red chilli: ½

For the seasoning

Method

- Wash the gram and soak it overnight in water.
- Drain and rinse thoroughly. Set aside.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Toss in the whole spices and red chilli and sauté for just 1 minute, till they are fragrant.

To season

- Add the ginger and garlic and sauté, till the raw aroma of the

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Large onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Medium-sized tomatoes, chopped: 2

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

To serve

Lime juice: 1 tsp

garlic disappears.

- Add the onion, season lightly with salt and sauté, till it's well caramelized.
- Mix in the tomatoes, season them lightly with salt and cook, till they soften.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and sauté for 3-4 minutes, till the oil rises to the surface.

To cook the gram

- Add the soaked gram and cover with water. Adjust the seasoning.
- Cover and simmer till the gram is tender.
- Remove from heat.

To complete the dish

- Mash a little of the gram into the curry; this will add to the taste.
- Drizzle the lime juice.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve hot with steamed rice, hot rotis or Papra (Gram Flour Crêpes; [p. 32](#)).

CHANA DAAL DHOKA KÉ SABJI

Bengal Gram Dumpling Curry

Chana Daal Dhoka ké Sabji is a unique alchemy, providing both taste and health benefits which is often a difficult proposition. Another good quality is that it can last in your refrigerator for almost a week without losing its nutritional value or taste. So, I often make it in order to make my life easier during busy weekdays. By doing this, I also get to eat healthy home-made food on days when it is almost impossible to cook a full meal.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the batter

Husked, split Bengal gram (chana daal): 1 cup

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½” piece

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2-3

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

For the tempering

Refined oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For frying the dhokas

Oil: 3-4 tbsp

Method

To make the batter

- Wash the daal and soak it overnight in water.
- Drain and rinse well.
- Put the daal with the remaining ingredients for the batter into a grinder to make a smooth paste. Adjust the seasoning.

To temper

- Put the oil in a heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.
- Swirl the pan to spread the oil

For the gravy

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Bay leaf (tej patta): 1

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Dried red chilli: 1

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Medium-sized onions, peeled and puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tbsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Yellow mustard, powdered: 1 tbsp

Salt: to taste

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 4-5

To serve

Lime juice: 1 tbsp (optional)

evenly over the base.

- Add the daal batter and mix well.

To prepare the dhokas

- Sauté the daal for 2-3 minutes, till it reduces and starts to come together.
- Grease a flat dish or a plate lightly with oil.
- Empty the contents of the pan on to the plate and spread it evenly on the entire plate like a cake. It should have a smooth surface.
- Leave it to set for 15-20 minutes. Then cut it in shapes of diamonds or squares. The dhokas are ready.

To fry the dhokas

- Put the oil in a frying pan over moderate heat.
- Fry the dhokas in batches, till they are a light golden brown on top.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To prepare the gravy

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the bay leaf, cumin seeds, asafoetida, red chilli and ginger-garlic paste. Sauté for 1-2 minutes.
- Add the onions and sauté, till golden brown.

- Sprinkle in the spice powders and salt. Mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Stir in the tomatoes and sauté, till it dries out slightly.
- Pour in 1½ cups of hot water and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Add the dhokas to the gravy and simmer for 3-4 minutes.

To serve

- Stir in the lime juice and transfer to a serving bowl.
- Serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis with onion rings on the side.

OAL KÉ SABJI

Yam Curry

Yam is called oal in Bihar and Bengal, suran or jimikand in Madhya Pradesh. As unbelievable as it may sound, oal dishes are often mistaken for fish. Somehow oal has the taste and texture resembling that of fish. There are many households in Bihar and Jharkhand where it's commonly referred to as a 'vegetarian fish' dish. I think the way it is prepared in a Bhojpuri kitchen also adds to its reputation as a 'vegetarian fish' dish.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20-30 minutes

Ingredients

For the yam

Yam (oal/suran/jimikand): 250 g

Salt: ½ tsp

Lime juice: 1 tbsp

For frying the yam

Oil: to shallow-fry

For the gravy

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Ginger-garlic paste: 2 tsp

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Method

To prepare the yam

- Scrub the yam and wash well. Peel and cut it into medium-sized pieces.
- Bring a pan of water to a boil over high heat.
- Add the yam, salt and lime juice and boil for 10 minutes.
- Remove from heat and drain thoroughly.

To fry the yam

- Pour the oil in a shallow frying pan over low heat.
- Fry the boiled yam in batches,

Medium-sized onion, peeled and puréed: ½

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2-3

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

To serve

Lime juice: 1 tbsp (optional)

till golden brown.

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To prepare the gravy

- Put the oil in a deep pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds, ginger-garlic paste, turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder. Sauté for just 1 minute.
- Add the onions and sauté, till golden brown.
- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté, till it dries out slightly.
- Sprinkle in the garam masala powder and salt and mix.
- Pour in ¼-½ cup of water and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Add the fried yam and simmer for 4-5 minutes.
- Remove from heat.

To serve

- Stir in the lime juice and spoon into a serving dish.
- Serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis with onion rings on the side.

Tip

While cutting the yam, apply some mustard oil on your hands, as it may cause itching.

BAINGAN BADI KI SABJI

Aubergine Curry with Black Gram Cakes

Baingan Badi ki Sabji is a staple in Bihari khana. It is so delicious, that it easily found its way into my repertoire. This is my grandmother-in-law's recipe and great to eat with rice or roti. These days badi is easily available in supermarkets and shops, but my grandmother-in-law once told me how making badis used to be a major event for the entire family — women from the neighbourhood would join in to help and fashion delicious badis while singing folk songs, laughing, and chit-chatting. According to her, making badis was actually a way to preserve daals and other vegetables in times of bad crops or lack of fresh green produce. But gradually, it became a delicacy and almost a regular feature in Bihar's cuisine.

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

For the badis

Refined oil: to deep-fry

Badi made of black gram (urad): 150 g

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 3 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Method

To fry the badis

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Fry the badis in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To temper

- Put the oil in a deep pan over moderate heat.

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

For the curry

Medium-sized onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Medium-sized tomato chopped: 1

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Aubergines (baingan), cut into medium-sized pieces: 500 g

Salt: to taste

To complete the dish

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½ tsp

- Add the cumin seeds and fenugreek seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the ginger and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the red chillies and asafoetida powder and give it a stir.

To make the curry

- Add the onion, season it lightly with salt and sauté, till golden brown.
- Add the tomatoes and sauté, till they soften.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and about 2 tbsp of water. Sauté, till the oil floats to the surface.
- Add the aubergines and salt and cook for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the fried badis and 2 cups of water.
- Stir gently and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and cook over low heat for about 10 minutes.

To complete the dish

- Sprinkle in the garam masala powder and mango powder and mix well.
- Adjust the seasoning and remove from heat.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

CHANA DAAL NENUA

Sponge Gourd and Bengal Gram Curry

Do not skip past this one, just because it is sponge gourd (nenua /gilki/turai). I know that this vegetable may not be a favourite with everyone, but this recipe may just alter that bias! Soft nenua with crunchy chana daal in a well-balanced curry is not only fabulous to taste, but a good source of fibre and protein. Just combine it with whole wheat roti or bread and you have a perfect nutritional post-workout meal.

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the gourd and daal

Sponge gourd (nenua/turai): 2-3 pieces

Husked, split Bengal gram (chana daal): 100 g

Salt: to taste

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 1 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Mustard seeds: 1 tsp

Dried red chillies: 1-2

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Garlic cloves, chopped: 4-5

Method

To prepare the gourd and daal

- Wash the gourd and peel it.
- Cut it into four quadrants and then into smaller pieces.
- Wash the daal and drain.
- Cook the daal with water to cover and a pinch of salt in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5-7 minutes (1 whistle). Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.
- Drain the daal. Set aside.

For the curry

Medium-sized onion, peeled and sliced: 1

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tbsp

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the tempering and sauté for 1-2 minutes.

To prepare the curry

- Add the onion and sauté, till pink.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and sauté for 1-2 minutes.
- Add the daal and mix well.
- Add the gourd and give it a good mix. Sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Pour in enough water to cover the contents of the pan and adjust the seasoning.
- Cover the pan and simmer over low heat, till the daal is cooked.

To serve

- Remove from heat and transfer to a serving dish.
- Serve hot with parathas, bread or roti.

Variations

You can make the same preparation using pumpkin (Chana Daal Kaddu or Pumpkin and Bengal Gram Curry) or bottle gourd (Chana Daal Lauki or Bottle Gourd and Bengal Gram Curry).

KOHRA SARSON KÉ LATPAT SABJI

Pumpkin in a Thick Mustard Gravy

Kohra, kaddu, pumpkin, butternut squash, call it anything, it's still difficult for mothers to make their kids eat it. I remember how picky I used to be as a kid and extremely impatient to either understand the so-called taste of kohra, or appreciate its nutritional value.

My childhood was spent in my sprawling ancestral home along with several uncles, aunts and cousins. Although we all lived as a happy and huge joint family, we had different kitchens. I remember one weekend just before lunch, I went to the kitchen and asked my mother about lunch. She said that she was cooking the Bihari-style kohra. The word kohra put me off so much that I decided to try my luck with one of my aunts – who also happened to be cooking the same dish as my mother! Perplexed at this coincidence I next rushed to my chachi's kitchen and to my surprise she was also cooking kohra! That's when I discovered that a whole lot of fresh pumpkin had arrived from our family's farm! Sad and dejected, I returned home and decided to eat lunch. The rest, as they say, is history!

Serves: 3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Red pumpkin (kohra/kaddu): 500 g

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Method

- Wash the pumpkin, peel it and dice into medium-sized chunks.

To temper

Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp
Dried red chillies: 2
Garlic cloves, peeled and kept whole: 3-4

For the gravy

Small onion, peeled and puréed: 1
Medium-sized tomato, pureed: 1
Salt: to taste
Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
Red chilli powder: ½ tsp
Coriander powder: 1 tsp
Yellow mustard, powdered: 1 tbsp
Garam masala powder: ½ tsp
Lime juice: 1 tsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

- Put the oil in a shallow pan over moderate heat.
- Add all the ingredients for the tempering and let them crackle.

To prepare the gravy

- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Mix in the tomato, season lightly with salt and sauté, till it softens.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and mix well. Sauté, till the oil floats to the surface.
- Add the pumpkin, adjust the seasoning and sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Pour in about ½ cup of water, cover the pan and simmer, till the pumpkin is cooked.

To serve

- Remove from heat, stir in the lime juice and spoon into a serving dish.
- Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with rice and daal for a delicious lunch.

KACHCHÉ KELÉ KÉ KOFTÉ KI SABJI

Banana Kofta Curry

Legend has it that the Mughals brought Kofté to India, and it travelled via Awadh to Bihar. Since it's such a brilliant diversion from the regular vegetable preparations, Biharis took to the kofta wholeheartedly and it is one of the special features of kitchens across the state.

Bihari kofté are slightly different from the Mughlai or Awadhi ones. Unlike the mild Mughlai versions, these are spicier. Also, Biharis do not use fresh cream, cashewnut paste or ghee, and therefore, it has fewer calories compared to the rich Awadhi preparations. That's why I feel that this version is much better suited to modern Indian families as they can enjoy it without guilt and eat it more frequently.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the kofté

Green cooking bananas (kachché kelé): 3-4

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½" piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 2-3

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2

Method

To prepare the kofté

- Wash the bananas and put them in a pan with ¼ cup of water and steam them for 3-4 minutes.
- Drain and set aside to cool.
- Grind the ginger, garlic and green chillies to make a smooth paste.

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped: 1 tbsp

Gram flour (besan): 2 tbsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

Rock salt (Lahori namak): ½ tsp

For frying the kofté

Oil: to deep-fry

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Bay leaf (tej patta): 1

Large black cardamom pods: 2

For the curry

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Small onion, peeled and puréed: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

Lime juice 1 tbsp (optional)

- Peel the bananas and put them in a bowl. Mash them completely.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the kofté and mix well. Adjust the seasoning.
- Your kofté mix is ready.
- Spread a little oil over your hands to prevent the mix from sticking, and shape them into balls about the size of golf balls.

To fry the kofté

- Put the oil in a deep frying pan over moderate heat.
- Deep-fry the kofté in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To temper

- Put the oil in a deep pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds, red chillies, bay leaf and cardamom and let them crackle.

To prepare the curry

- Add the ginger-garlic paste and sauté for just 1 minute.
- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté, till it dries out slightly.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and

coriander powder and sauté, till the oil rises to the surface.

- Mix in the garam masala powder, salt and lime juice.
- Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of warm water into the pan and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Add the fried kofté and simmer for 4-5 minutes.

To serve

- Remove from heat and spoon into a serving dish.
- Serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

Variation

If you don't want to make the kofté, you can prepare Kachché Kelé Ki Sabji (Banana Curry): Prepare the curry as given above. Peel the bananas, slice them into rounds and add them to the curry. Simmer for 8-10 minutes, till the slices are cooked.

Tip

Peel and slice the bananas just before adding them to the curry. If they are left out for too long after being peeled, they get discoloured. Alternately, drizzle lime juice over them to prevent discolouration.

KATHAL KÉ KOFTÉ KI SABJI

Jackfruit Kofta Curry

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the kofté

Jackfruit (kathal): 500 g

Salt: ½ tsp

Gram flour (besan): 2 tbsp

Semolina (sooji): 2 tbsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

For frying the kofté

Oil: to deep-fry

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Bay leaf (tej patta): 1

For the curry

Ginger garlic paste: 1 tbsp

Small onion, peeled and puréed: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Method

To prepare the kofté

- Apply plenty of mustard oil on your hands while handling jackfruit, otherwise it will stick.
- Peel the jackfruit and cut it into small pieces.
- Cook the jackfruit with a pinch of salt and just enough water to just cover in a pressure cooker over high heat, till the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle).
- Remove from heat and open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.
- Drain the jackfruit and transfer to a bowl. Mash it with a spatula.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the kofté and mix, till well blended.
- Spread a little oil over your hands to prevent the mix from

Salt: to taste

Lime juice: 1 tbsp (optional)

sticking, and shape them into balls about the size of golf balls.

To fry the kofté

- Put the oil in a deep frying pan over moderate heat.
- Deep-fry the kofté in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To temper

- Put the oil in a deep pan over moderate heat.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the tempering and let them crackle.

To prepare the curry

- Add the ginger-garlic paste and sauté for just 1 minute.
- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté, till it dries out slightly.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder and sauté, till the oil rises to the surface.
- Stir in the garam masala powder and salt.
- Pour 1 cup of warm water into the pan and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Add the fried kofté and simmer for 4-5 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

Variation

Kathal ki Sabji (Jackfruit Curry): Prepare the gravy as given above, but don't add the water. Peel the jackfruit and cut it into medium-sized pieces. Add the jackfruit to the gravy and sauté for 4-5 minutes. Pour in about 1½ cups of warm water to cover the contents of the pan and simmer, till the jackfruit is tender.

LAUKI KÉ KOFTÉ KI SABJI

Bottle Gourd Kofta Curry

This is the best way to ensure that people who don't like to eat this vegetable, begin swearing by it!

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the kofté

Bottle gourd (lauki): 500 g
Gram flour (besan): 3-4 tbsp
Green chillies, finely chopped: ½ tsp
Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp
Red chilli powder: ½ tsp
Garam masala powder: ½ tsp
Salt: to taste.

For frying the kofté

Oil: to deep-fry

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp
Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
Bay leaf (tej patta): 1
Dried red chillies: 1-2
Ginger-garlic paste: ½ tbsp

Method

To prepare the kofté

- Peel the gourd and grate it.
- Squeeze the grated gourd to remove as much water as possible.
- Transfer the drained gourd to a bowl and mix in the remaining ingredients for the kofté.
- Shape the mixture into balls about the size of golf balls.

To fry the kofté

- Put the oil in a deep frying pan on moderate heat.
- Deep-fry the kofté in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

For the curry

Large onion, peeled and puréed: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tbsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the bay leaf, red chillies and ginger-garlic paste and sauté for 1 minute.

To make the curry

- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and mix well.
- Add the tomatoes and sauté for 3-4 minutes, till the oil floats to the surface.
- Pour in ½ cup of water. (You can adjust the quantity of water according to the desired consistency of curry.)
- Simmer for 5-6 minutes and adjust the seasoning.

To complete the dish

- Add the kofté and simmer for 2-3 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

KADHI BADI

Curd Curry with Gram Flour Dumplings

Kadhi Badi holds a special place in all Bihari kitchens. My husband tells me stories of his childhood, when he and his cousins would steal and eat the badis, even before they went into the kadhi, leaving the ladies of the house confused and worried. To be honest, he does it even today.

The main difference between a Bihari kadhi and the Punjabi version is that the former has a soupy consistency, whereas the latter is thicker. Once while organizing a plated, sit-down dinner for an Italian family, I served Bihari kadhi as a soup and they absolutely loved it.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the badis

Gram flour (besan): 100 g

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

Water: ½ cup

For frying the badis

Oil: to deep-fry

For the kadhi

Gram flour (besan): 2 tbsp

Method

To make the badis

- Put all the dry ingredients for the badis in a large bowl.
- Add the water a little at a time, while whisking to make a batter of pouring consistency.
- Continue to whisk for a minimum of 5 minutes. The more you whisk, the fluffier your badis will be. Sometimes, I put everything in a mixer grinder and whiz it for 3-4 minutes.

Whisked curd: 1 cup

Water: 2 cups

Salt: to taste

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Curry leaves (kari patta): 4-5 (optional)

Garlic cloves, peeled and kept whole: 2-3

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

To fry the badis

- Put the oil in a deep frying pan.
- Add a spoonful of batter at a time and fry the badis in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To make the kadhi

- Put all the ingredients for the kadhi in a bowl and whisk for 4-5 minutes till well blended. Set aside.

To temper

- Put the oil in a heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds, red chillies, garlic, curry leaves and asafoetida powder and sauté for 1 minute.
- Add the turmeric powder and chilli powder to the pan and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Add the kadhi to the pan. Mix well and adjust the seasoning.
- Add the badis and simmer for 10-12 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and garnish with coriander leaves.
- Serve hot with steamed rice.

Variation

You can make kadhi with chopped lady's fingers (okra) or potatoes.

Sauté the vegetables separately, till cooked.

Add them to the kadhi at the end instead of the badis and simmer for 10-12 minutes.

Tip

if you sauté the vegetables in the same pan after preparing the tempering, the spices will burn, while the vegetables are being cooked. So, it's better to fry the vegetables separately.

AALOO TAMATAR KA JHOR

Potatoes with Tomato Curry

Jhor is a quick and easy version of the elaborate curries of Bihar. It's also a life saver on 'my fridge is empty' kind of days. As the dish is cooked with minimum ingredients, it takes very little time to cook and is best for cold winter nights when you don't want to be away from your heater and blankets for long periods of time. Try it with some fresh coriander on top; it enhances the taste and aroma of the dish.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

For the curry

Medium-sized potatoes, peeled and cut into large dices: 3-4

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½" piece

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

Medium-sized tomatoes, chopped: 2-

Method

To temper

- Put the oil in a pressure cooker over moderate heat.
- Add the remaining ingredients for the tempering and let them crackle.

To cook the curry

- Add all the ingredients for the curry, except the potatoes into the pressure cooker and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the potatoes, season lightly with salt and add 1 cup of water.

3

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

- Close the cooker and cook over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5 minutes (1 whistle).
- Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.

To serve

- Bring the contents of the cooker to a boil over high heat.
- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.
- Enjoy with steamed rice or hot rotis.

Tip

You can cook it in a wok. Just add about 1½ cups of water and cook, till the potatoes are tender. It will take a little longer to cook than pressure cooking.

Variation

Use ½ cup of shelled green peas instead of the potatoes to make the traditional Mattar Tamatar ka Jhor (Green Peas with Tomato Curry).

SEHJAN AALOO KA JHOR

Drumsticks and Potato Curry

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 1 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

For the curry

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½” piece

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Medium-sized tomatoes, diced: 2

Drumsticks, strung and cut into 3” pieces: 4-5

Medium-sized potatoes, peeled and diced: 2

Salt: to taste

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½ tsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

To temper

- Put the oil in a pressure cooker over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds, cumin seeds, red chillies and asafoetida powder and let them crackle.

To cook the curry

- Add the ginger, turmeric powder, chilli powder and tomatoes and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the drumsticks and potatoes and season lightly with salt. Cover the contents of the cooker with water.
- Close the cooker and cook over high heat, till it reaches full pressure (first whistle).
- Remove from heat and open the cooker after it reaches room temperature.

To serve

- Add the mango powder. Mix well and bring to a boil over high heat.
- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

Variation

There's another version of drumsticks curry in Bihar, where the curry is thick and cooked in a pan instead of a pressure cooker. Cook it in the same way in a pan, but add only 1 cup of water to the drumsticks and potatoes. Adjust the seasoning, cover and simmer till the vegetables are tender.

LAUKI AUR PYAAZ KA ISHTEW

Bottle Gourd and Onion Stew

My mother-in-law has this great talent of making cooking seem so easy. She prefers to enter the kitchen, whip up something in 15-20 minutes and come out. However, the flavour in her dishes is such that it amazes many that something so delicious can be prepared so quickly. This is her favourite recipe.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the stew

Bottle gourd (lauki): 500 g
Medium-sized onions, peeled and diced: 3
Medium-sized tomato, chopped: 1
Ginger, peeled: ½” piece
Garlic clove, peeled and kept whole: 3-4
Black peppercorns: 3-4
Cloves: 1-2
Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
Red chilli powder: ½ tsp
Coriander powder: 1 tsp
Cumin powder: ½ tsp
Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Method

To cook the stew

- Wash the gourd and peel it.
- Cut it into 4 lengthwise pieces and then chop each quadrant into medium-sized pieces. The pieces should not be too small, otherwise they will become mushy.
- Put all the ingredients for the stew in a heavy-based, pan.
- Pour in just enough water to cover the contents and put the pan over low heat.
- Simmer for 10-15 minutes, till the gourd is tender.
- Adjust the seasoning and

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

Salt: to taste

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

remove from heat.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve with hot rotis.

Tip

You can pressure cook the stew. Cook till the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle) and remove from heat.

PHOOL GOBHI MASALA CURRY

Spicy Cauliflower Curry

Phool Gobhi Masala Curry always reminds me of my first trip to Delhi after getting married. My husband's aunt, Choti Mummy, as we call her, prepared this delicious dish for lunch. Her gobhi masala stood out from the others that I had eaten. So much so, that after taking the very first bite, I immediately asked her for the recipe. A perfect combination of indigenous cooking techniques and spices, this is a wholesome meal for every occasion. It's a little bit of an indulgence, but believe me, it's absolutely worth it!

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the cauliflower

Medium-sized cauliflower: 1

Oil: to deep-fry

For the spice paste

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped:
½" piece

Garlic, peeled and roughly chopped:
3-4 cloves

Dried red chillies: 1-2

For the curry

Oil: 2 tbsp

Method

To fry the cauliflower

- Cut the cauliflower into small florets.
- Wash the florets well and drain thoroughly.
- Spread the florets on a kitchen towel and make sure they are completely dry.
- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the cauliflower florets and deep-fry them in batches, till golden brown.

Medium-sized onion, peeled and puréed: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tbsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To make the spice paste

- Grind all the ingredients for the spice paste in a small blender to make a smooth paste.

To cook the curry

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the spice paste and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté till it dries out.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders. Mix well and add a few drops of water. Sauté, till the oil floats to the surface.
- Add the cauliflower florets and mix well.
- Pour in enough water to cover the contents of the pan and adjust the seasoning.
- Cover the pan and simmer over low heat for about 10 minutes.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and garnish with coriander leaves.
- Serve hot with rotis or parathas.

Variations

To make Phool Gobhi Mattar Masala Curry (Spicy Cauliflower and Green

Peas Curry), shell 100 g of green peas, add it to the curry along with the cauliflower and continue as given.

For Phool Gobhi Aaloo Masala Curry (Spicy Cauliflower and Potato Curry), add 1 peeled, diced potato along with the cauliflower and continue as given.

If you don't want to deep-fry the cauliflower, so be it. Add the washed cauliflower instead of the fried ones and sauté for 3-4 minutes before proceeding to the next step.

MADHUBANI CHICKEN CURRY

Madhubani Chicken Curry is actually the outcome of my experiments in my Bhojpuri kitchen. This was when everybody at home had got bored of eating the same chicken curry and would often say: 'Please, can we try something new?' In my quest to create something new, I came up with this recipe. It's a big hit in my family as it's spicy and loaded with green cardamom and black peppercorns, two of the most loved spices in a Bhojpuri kitchen. We love eating it with roti, raita and fried papad.

Why the name, Madhubani chicken curry? While I was trying to assign a name to my creation, it struck me that in Madhya Pradesh we have a very delicious chicken recipe called Warli Special chicken. It is named after the famous Warli paintings of Bhimbetka, a heritage site on the outskirts of Bhopal. Similarly in Bihar is the Madhubani painting, a wonderful and unique art form from the Mithila region of Bihar. It's my family's absolute favourite and I hope it becomes yours too.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Chicken, cleaned and jointed: 1 kg

For the marinade

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Salt: ½ tsp

For the Madhubani masala paste

Green cardamom pods: 2-3

Black peppercorns: 6-7

Method

- Wash the chicken and pat dry.

To marinate

- Mix the marinade ingredients in a bowl and rub it into the chicken. Set aside to marinate.

To make the Madhubani masala paste

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 5-6

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: 1" piece

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 5-6

Fresh coriander leaves, without stems: a handful

Fresh mint leaves, without stems: a handful

For the tempering

Oil: 3-4 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For the curry

Medium-sized onions, peeled and finely sliced: 4

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

- Put all the ingredients for the spice paste into a grinder to make a smooth paste. Your fresh Madhubani masala paste is ready.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok or a deep, heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.

To cook the curry

- Add the onions and sauté over low heat, till golden brown.
- Mix in the Madhubani masala paste and sauté over low heat for 3-4 minutes.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and 2 tbsp of water. Mix well and sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the chicken and toss to coat the chicken with the spices. Sauté, till the chicken starts to brown.
- Add about ½ cup of water, cover the pan and simmer, stirring occasionally, till the chicken is tender.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve hot with pooris or rotis, any raita of your choice and fried papad.

MASALA CHICKEN

‘Ka bhaujai, chicken khanéwala aadmi ko aap paneer khilaiyega? E nahi chalega’ (No vegetarian substitutes for me please, sister-in-law. I like my chicken.) That’s what I’d heard, when I’d cooked paneer for a small family get-together just a few weeks after my wedding. If it’s not a ‘sacred’ day, or a Tuesday or Thursday (days when several people in Bihar abstain from eating non-vegetarian food), then everyone expects chicken to be on the table during family get-togethers or celebrations.

However, chicken is a new entrant to the Bhojpuri kitchen. Earlier, people preferred khassi (mutton) or fish. But now due to its easy availability, Bihar seems to have taken to chicken with a vengeance! After thoroughly enjoying many different versions of chicken curry at family gettogethers, I have now come up with my own recipe, which is a lighter version of the traditional preparation, yet truly captures its essence. So, here’s a recipe that you can prepare often, without worrying about the calories.

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Chicken, cleaned and jointed: 1 kg

For the onion paste

Dried red chillies, roughly torn: 3

Medium-sized onions, peeled and quartered: 4

For the spice paste

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Method

- Wash the chicken thoroughly and set aside in a colander to drain.

To make the onion paste

- Put the onions and red chillies with a little water in a grinder and grind to make a smooth paste.

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

For the tempering

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Green cardamom pods: 2

Large black cardamom pod: 1

Cinnamon: 1" stick

Cloves: 1-2

Star anise (badian): 1

Mace flowers (javitri): 1-2

Black peppercorns: 3-4

For the curry

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 3

Salt: to taste

For the masala

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 5-6

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½" piece

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 2-3

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Green cardamom pod: 1

Large black cardamom pods: 2

Cinnamon: 1" stick

Cloves: 2

Star Anise: 1

Mace: 1-2

Black peppercorns: 4-5

For frying the masala

Ghee: 1 tbsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves

To make the spice paste

- Combine all the spice powders in a small bowl.
- Add a little water and mix, till well blended.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok or a deep, heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the whole spices and let them crackle.

To cook the curry

- Add the onion paste and sauté over low heat, till golden brown.
- Mix in the spice paste and sauté over low heat, till the oil floats to the surface. If you feel the masala is getting dry, sprinkle in some water as required to prevent burning.
- Add the chicken and toss to coat the chicken with the spices. Sauté, till the chicken starts to brown.
- Add the tomato and simmer over low heat, till the chicken is tender.

To prepare the masala

- While the chicken is being cooked, prepare the masala.
- Put all the ingredients in a grinder with 2 tbsp of water to make a smooth paste.
- Put the ghee in a small pan over

moderate heat. Add the masala paste and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

To complete the dish

- When the chicken is tender, add the fried masala paste, mix well and heat through.
- Taste and adjust the seasoning.

To serve

- Transfer the chicken to a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with parboiled rice or hot rotis.

BIHARI HALWAI-STYLE MUTTON

Spicy Mutton Curry

Sasurji: Aaj humko waisa mutton khana hai.

Dulhin: Kaisa Papa?

Sasurji: Bihari halwai-style ka.

Dulhin: Waisa hee toh banaté hain hamesha, Papa.

Sasurji: Na, tum log waisa nahi banati ho, tum log healthy banane ké chakkar mé reh jaati ho.

(Father-in-law: I want to eat my favourite mutton curry today.

Daughter-in-law: Which is your favourite, Papa?

Father-in-law: Bihari halwai-style.

Daughter-in-law: That's how I make it.

Father-in-law: No, you health conscious people make it differently. That's not how I like it. I prefer the traditional preparation.)

This is the conversation I had with my father-in-law before I learnt how to cook this recipe. I remember eating mutton curry prepared by halwais (confectioners) employed at our ancestral home in Hazaribagh during my first Holi. So I summoned up all my courage, recalled everything about that mutton curry and gave it my best shot. As a result, it became one of my signature dishes.

The dish is called Halwai-style Mutton because of the measures – there isn't any set proportion for the quantity of oil and spices that go into it. And it's not deemed to be authentic halwai mutton curry if the oil is not floating on top. Traditionally, halwais never used teaspoons, tablespoons or cups for measuring ingredients and added whatever they felt was appropriate at that given moment. So this is a slightly indulgent curry, but unforgettable once you taste it. Before we get down to the recipe, there is a point to be made: the

mutton is first sautéed in oil separately, till it browns. The pieces are removed from the pan and set aside. There are three important reasons for this. First, when we sauté the mutton, it renders its fat to the pan, which in turn helps the mutton to get tender, without getting chewy. Second, this fat helps to make a superb gravy. Third, by sautéing the mutton, we seal most of the pores, so while it's cooked in the gravy, it doesn't give up all its juices and retains its flavour.

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the masala paste

Oil: 2 tbsp

Coriander seeds, roasted: 1 tsp

Fresh coriander leaves: a handful

Green cardamom pods: 3

Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped:
2" piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly
chopped: 8-10

Green chillies, roughly chopped: 4-5

Salt: to taste

For the mutton

Mutton on the bone, cut into curry-
sized pieces: 1 kg

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

For the tempering

Oil: 6-7 tbsp

Bay leaf (tej patta): 1

Black peppercorns: 4-5

Green cardamom pods: 1-2

Large black cardamom pods: 2

Dried red chillies: 2

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Method

To prepare the masala paste

- Put all the ingredients for the masala paste in a small grinder to make a smooth paste. Remove from the grinder and set aside in a bowl.

To sauté the mutton

- Wash the mutton and pat dry.
- Put the oil in a deep, heavy-based pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mutton pieces and sauté, till brown.
- Drain and transfer to a bowl. Set aside

To temper

- Add the oil to the same pan and heat through.
- Add the ingredients for the tempering and let them crackle.

To cook the curry

- Add the onions, season lightly with salt and sauté, till golden

For the curry

Medium-sized onions, peeled and sliced: 4-5

Salt: to taste

Turmeric powder: ½ tbsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tbsp

Coriander powder: ½ tbsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

brown.

- Add the prepared masala paste and the spice powders.
- Sprinkle in 2 tbsp of water and sauté, till the oil rises to the surface.
- Add the mutton and adjust the seasoning.
- Sauté, till the mutton pieces are well coated with the spices.
- Pour in enough water to cover the contents of the pan.
- Simmer over low to moderate heat, till the mutton is tender.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with steamed rice or hot rotis.

MACHLI KA SARSONWALA JHOR

Mustard Fish Curry

Mustard seed is one of the most popular spices across the Indian subcontinent. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and from Bengal to Maharashtra, it is used in almost all traditional preparations. South Indians cannot imagine their sambar or chutney without mustard seeds. Kashmiris need its heat to fight off the cold weather. True blue Bengalis would rather starve than live without their sorse (mustard-based gravies). Maharashtrians cannot think of enjoying their poha or sheera without a tempering of mustard seeds.

Mustard is actually a very versatile ingredient. You can use it to temper your oil when you want a mild, earthy flavour without any pepper in it. But when you want to enjoy its peppery flavour to enliven your curries, you can grind it and add it to your preparations. Mustard fish curry is a traditional combination of mustard's peppery flavour and tomato's tangy touch! This is my favourite way of enjoying fish.

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the fish

Rohu fish, 6" steaks: 4-5
Turmeric powder: 1 tsp
Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
Salt: to taste
Oil: 4-5 tbsp

Method

To prepare the fish

- Wash the fish pieces, drain, pat dry with kitchen towels and place them on a plate.
- Combine the spice powders and salt in a small bowl.

For the masala paste

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies: 2

Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 3-4

Large black cardamom pod: 1

For the curry

Oil: 2 tbsp

Small onion, peeled and puréed: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, puréed: 2

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

Lime juice: 1 tsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

- With your hands, spread the spices evenly all over the fish pieces.
- Put the oil in a shallow pan over moderate heat.
- Fry the fish, till cooked and golden brown.

To prepare the masala paste

- Put all the ingredients in a small mixer jar and grind to make a smooth paste. Set aside.

To prepare the curry

- Put the oil in a deep pan over moderate heat.
- Add the masala paste and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the onion and sauté, till light golden.
- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté, till slightly reduced.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder. Sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the garam masala powder and mix well.
- Pour in 1 cup of water and adjust the seasoning.
- Add the fish pieces and simmer for 3-4 minutes.
- Drizzle in the lime juice and remove from heat.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish,

garnish with coriander leaves
and serve hot with steamed rice.

SPICY BIHARI KABABS

While the Awadh region has a wide range of kababs, from the melt-in-the-mouth galouti to the smoky tundé ké kabab, all famous for their beautiful and delicate layers of flavours and textures, we have only one variety, the Spicy Bihari Kabab, famous for its boldness and flavours. It is quite in line with one of my favourite Bhojpuri songs: Ek Bihari sab pe bhaari (One Bihari is good enough to tackle several adversaries).

I usually whip up a curd dip to enjoy with these kababs, as it works well to balance the flavours.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Chicken, boneless, cubed: 500 g

For the marinade

Hung curd, whisked: ½ cup

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 2 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Ginger-garlic paste: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Black salt (kala namak): ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

Lime juice: 1 tbsp

To grill the kababs

Oil: 2 tbsp

Method

- Wash the chicken and pat dry on kitchen towels.

To marinate the kababs

- Combine all the marinade ingredients in a bowl.
- Add the chicken and mix well.
- Marinate for a minimum of 3-4 hours.

To grill the kababs

- Rope the chicken onto skewers.
- Put a tava or griddle pan over low heat.
- Drizzle some oil over it and

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

cook the skewered chicken, turning the skewers all the while, till the chicken is tender.

To bake the kababs

- Alternatively, pre-heat an oven at 200°C.
- Brush the chicken pieces with oil and place the skewers on a grill in the oven.
- Bake for 20 minutes, turning the skewers once in between.

To serve

- Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with onion rings, lime wedges, slit green chillies along with Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#)), and Lehsuniya Hari Chutney (Garlic and Fresh Coriander Chutney; [p. 131](#)).

THE BOLD BHUJIAS OF BIHAR

Bhujia denotes a pan-roasted, dry preparation of vegetables. In Bihar, bhujia is more about the celebration of seasons, as it is always prepared with potatoes and a seasonal vegetable. Winters in Bhojpuri kitchens is celebrated with various bhujias, such as cauliflower, aubergine, green peas, carrot, boro (string beans) and flat beans, while everyone waits for the summers to enjoy pointed gourd (parwal) or lady's finger bhujia.

For me, it represents a wonderful harmony between the natural taste of fresh produce, whole spices and spice powders. Traditionally, the oil is first tempered with whole spices and then the vegetables are sautéed along with other spice powders. When the whole spices are added to hot oil, they leave their essential flavours in it, and when the vegetable is cooked in the same oil, it absorbs all those wonderful flavours, and turns more delicious and exotic. They serve as a great accompaniment for your afternoon steamed rice and daal, or parathas at breakfast. Bhujia is also an easy, fuss-free way to enjoy at winter picnics or in a school box lunch.



[AALOO KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Potatoes](#)

[VRATWALÉ KALHARÉ AALOO](#)

[Pan-roasted Boiled Potatoes](#)

[AALOO BAINGAN KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Aubergines and Potatoes](#)

[AJWAIN KACHCHE KELE KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Bananas with Carom Seeds](#)

[GOBHI MATTAR KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Cauliflower with Green Peas](#)

[PACHPHORAN SAEM AALOO KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Flat Beans and Potatoes with Five Whole Spices](#)

[PACHPHORAN KOHRA](#)

[Pumpkin cooked with Five Whole Spices](#)

[PARWAL KA MASALAWALA BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Pointed Gourd](#)

[KUNDRI KI BHUJIA](#)

[Pan-roasted Ivy Gourd](#)

[BORO KI TAMATARWALI BHUJIA](#)

Pan-roasted Green Beans with Tomatoes

SEHJAN KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Drumsticks



ALOO KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Potatoes

There are many preparations of Aaloo ki Bhujia and every house has its own version.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 1 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Garlic cloves, peeled and crushed: 2-3

The vegetable

Medium-sized potatoes, peeled and chopped: 2-3

Salt: to taste

Method

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the cumin seeds and garlic. Sauté for 1-2 minutes.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and mix, till well blended.

To cook the potatoes

- Add the chopped potatoes and toss, till the potatoes are well coated with the spices.
- Season with salt and sauté, till the potatoes are cooked.

Variations

Aaloo-Pyaaz ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Potatoes with Onions): After sautéing the garlic, add 1 chopped onion, season well and sauté, till light golden brown. Sprinkle in the spice powders and continue as given above.

Aaloo-Mattar ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Potatoes with Green Peas): Follow the same procedure as given for Aaloo-Pyaaz ki Bhujia. After browning the onion, add 1 cup of shelled green peas and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle in the spice powders and proceed as given.

Use boiled potatoes; they go well with green peas.

Aaloo-Shimla Mirch ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Potatoes with Capsicums): Substitute the green peas with 4-5 green capsicums; works wonderfully with both boiled and uncooked potatoes.

VRATWALÉ KALHARÉ AALOO

Pan-roasted Boiled Potatoes

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Ingredients

Medium-sized potato: 2-3

For the tempering

Refined oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Green chillies, slit lengthwise: 1-2

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Salt or black salt (kala namak): to taste

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and chop them. Set aside in a bowl.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the cumin seeds, green chillies and asafoetida powder and sauté for just 1 minute.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder.

To complete the dish

- Immediately add the potatoes. Season with salt.
- Sauté for 3-4 minutes, till the flavours have blended.

To serve

- Spoon on to a serving dish and garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot with hot pooris.

Variation

When preparing this dish especially for *paaran* (breaking a fast with vegetarian food, with no onion and garlic in it), I add 4-5 green capsicums and it works wonders. Cut the capsicum to the same size and shape as the potatoes. Add them right after the turmeric powder and sauté for 2-3 minutes before adding the potatoes.

AALOO BAINGAN KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Aubergines and Potatoes

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Medium-sized potatoes: 1-2

Long, thin aubergines (baingan): 3-4

For the tempering

Oil: 2 tbsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Garlic cloves, peeled and kept whole: 3-4

Dried red chillies, broken into pieces: 1-2

For the seasoning

Large onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1 tsp

Method

- Wash the potatoes and peel them. Chop them into medium-sized cubes.
- Wash the aubergines and pat dry. Chop them into the same size as the potatoes.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the fenugreek seeds, cumin seeds and garlic and sauté for 1 minute.
- Toss in the red chillies.

To season

- Add the onions, season with just a pinch of salt and sauté, till pink.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

- Mix in the garam masala powder.

To cook the vegetables

- Add the potatoes, mix well and season them lightly. Sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the aubergines and adjust the seasoning.
- Cover and cook till the potatoes and aubergines are tender.

To serve

- Sprinkle the mango powder and mix well.
- Serve hot with rice and daal or hot Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#)),

AJWAIN KACHCHÉ KELÉ KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Bananas with Carom Seeds

If you miss nibbling on chips while watching movies because you are trying to stay healthy, then Ajwain Kachché Kelé ki Bhujia is the right answer for you. Thin slices of cooking banana, sautéed with just a few spices, results in a less crispy but a lot healthier version of banana chips. It gives you the feeling of eating chips, but minus the calorie intake. In addition, it takes care of your nutritional requirements. My Friday movie nights are near impossible without a big bowl of this dish!

Serves: 2-4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Green cooking bananas (kachché kelé): 2

For the tempering

Oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Ajwain: ½ tsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): ½ tsp

Dried red chilli: 1

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Method

- Peel the bananas just before cooking them and cut into round slices.

To temper

- Put the oil in a pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the ajwain and nigella seeds.
- Lower the heat and add the red

Coriander powder: 1tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ¼ tsp

Garam masala powder: ½ tsp

chilli and turmeric powder.

To cook the bananas

- Immediately add the bananas. Don't season now, or else you will get a moist bhujia instead of a crispy one.

To season

- After the bananas are almost cooked, sprinkle the remaining spice powders.
- Sauté, till the bananas are tender and adjust the seasoning.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve hot with hot parathas or rotis.

GOBHI MATTAR KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Cauliflower with Green Peas

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Medium-sized cauliflower: 1

Shelled green peas: 1 cup

Medium-sized potato: 1

For the tempering

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Ginger, peeled and finely chopped:
½" piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely
chopped: 3-4

For the seasoning

Large onion, peeled and chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Method

- Cut the cauliflower into florets. We need small florets, so chop the big ones in half. Wash them thoroughly and pat dry.
- Wash the green peas and drain.
- Wash the potato. Peel and chop into medium sized cubes.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the fenugreek seeds, cumin seeds, ginger and garlic and sauté for 1 minute.

To season

- Add the onion, season with just a pinch of salt and sauté, till golden brown.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder. Sauté for 2-3 minutes.

- Mix in the garam masala powder.

To cook the vegetables

- Add the potato, season lightly, mix well and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the green peas and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Stir in the cauliflower florets and adjust the seasoning.
- Cover the pan and simmer, till the vegetables are tender, but firm.

To serve

Serve hot with daal and rice or hot rotis.

PACHPHORAN SAEM AALOO KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Flat Fava Beans and Potatoes with Five Whole Spices

Pachphoran is a combination of five whole spices — cumin seeds (zeera), nigella seeds (kalaunji), fenugreek seeds (methi dana), mustard seeds (sarson) and fennel seeds (saunf). The idea is to flavour the oil with these five whole spices, so that when the vegetables are cooked in it, the flavours of the spices spread evenly into the bhujia.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Flat fava beans (saem): 250 g

Medium-sized potato: 1

For the tempering

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): ½ tsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Fennel seeds (saunf): ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely

Method

- Wash the beans. Trim and string them and chop into 1” pieces.
- Wash the potato. Peel and cut them into small thin slices.

To temper

- Put the oil in a kadhai over moderate heat.
- Add the whole spices and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the garlic and sauté for 1

chopped: 2-3

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Salt: to taste

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1 tsp

minute.

- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder.

To cook the vegetables

- Immediately add the potatoes, season them, mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the beans and mix well.
- Adjust the seasoning, cover and cook over low heat, till the vegetables are tender.

To serve

- Remove from heat and stir in the mango powder.
- Spoon into a serving dish and enjoy delicious saem-aaloo with hot rotis.

Variation

Pachphoran Saem Baingan ki Bhujia (Pan-roasted Flat Fava Beans and Aubergine with Five Whole Spices) is one more super popular variety of pachphoran bhujia. To prepare it, use 250 g of chopped aubergines instead of the potato; it goes very well with the beans.

PACHPHORAN KOHRA

Pumpkin cooked with Five Whole Spices

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Pumpkin (kohra), medium size: 1
Oil: 2-3 tbsp
Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp
Cumin seeds: ½ tsp
Onion seeds (magraila): ½ tsp
Mustard seeds: ½ tsp
Fennel seeds (saunf): ½ tsp
Garlic cloves, whole: 2-3
Dry red chillies: 2
Onion, sliced: 1
Turmeric powder: 1tsp
Red chili powder: 1 tsp
Coriander powder: 2 tsp
Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1 tsp
Salt: to taste
Sugar: ½ tsp

Method

- Wash and dry pumpkin. Chop in four quadrants, slice it vertically and then cut them into small pieces.
- Heat oil in a wok and add methi dana, jeera, onion seeds, mustard seeds, and saunf. Let the pachphoran spices splutter. Then add garlic, sauté for one minute.
- Add sliced onion, season it, sauté till golden brown.
- Now add turmeric powder, red chilli powder and coriander powder. Season them, mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Now add the pumpkin, mix well. Adjust the seasoning, cover and cook at low flame till the pumpkin becomes soft. Then switch off the flame, add aamchoor powder, sugar and mix well.

- Enjoy with hot daal and rice.

PARWAL KA MASALAWALA BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Spicy Pointed Gourd

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Pointed gourd (parwal): 5-6

For the tempering

Oil: 3-4 tbsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Salt: to taste

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1 tsp

For the garnish

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

- Wash the gourds and pat dry. Slice them lengthwise into quarters.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the cumin seeds and let them crackle.

To season

- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder, coriander powder and mix well.

To cook the gourds

- Add the gourds, season lightly with salt and mix well. Sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- Stir in the garam masala powder and adjust the seasoning.

- Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, till the gourds are tender.

To serve

- Sprinkle mango powder and mix well.
- Spoon into a serving dish, garnish with coriander leaves and serve with hot rotis.

Tip

If you find the gourds sticking to the pan, sprinkle about 1 tbsp of water and mix well.

KUNDRI KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Ivy Gourd

Don't underestimate this humble vegetable as it has immense medicinal properties. One of the most important qualities of kundri (ivy gourd) or tendli, is that it helps control blood sugar levels, as also diabetes. I actually like it for its brilliant tangy flavour which goes very well with hot and spicy, Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#))

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

Ivy gourd (kundri/tendli): 250 g

For the tempering

Oil: 2-3 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Fennel seeds (saunf): ½ tsp

For the seasoning

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped: 2-3

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Salt: to taste

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 1

Method

- Wash the gourds and pat dry. Chop off both the ends and cut them lengthwise into quarters.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the whole spices and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute.
- Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, chilli powder and coriander powder and mix well.

tsp

To cook the gourd

- Immediately add the gourd and season with salt.
- Toss to mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.
- Add just 2 tbsp of water.
- Mix well, cover the pan and cook, till the gourds are tender.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and enjoy the delicious kundri with hot rotis.

BORO KI TAMATARWALI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Green Beans with Tomatoes

It is such a delight to eat light, crunchy green beans cooked with garlic, cumin and tomatoes in an array of delicious spices. My favourite way of eating green beans is with rice and daal. In each bite, you can enjoy the soft rice and daal along with crunchy boro, which is simply amazing.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

Green beans (boro): 250 g

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

Ginger, peeled and grated: ½” piece

Garlic cloves, peeled and crushed: 3-4

For the seasoning

Small onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Medium-sized tomatoes, finely chopped: 2

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1tsp

Method

- Wash the beans and drain. Trim and string the beans and cut into 1” pieces.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the cumin seeds, ginger and garlic. Sauté for 1 minute.

To season

- Add the onion and sauté, till golden brown.
- Stir in the tomatoes and sauté, till they soften.

Coriander powder: 1 tsp
Garam masala powder: ½ tsp
Salt: to taste

- Sprinkle in the spice powders and 2 tbsp of water. Mix well and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

To cook the beans

- Add the beans and season with salt.
- Cover the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, till the beans are tender. Add a little water if required, to prevent the beans from burning.

To serve

- Prepare some chaunkhéwaali daal (tempered daal) as an accompaniment, and enjoy with steamed rice.

SEHJAN KI BHUJIA

Pan-roasted Drumsticks

Serves: 3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

Drumsticks: 5-6

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Garlic cloves, peeled and crushed: 2-3

For the seasoning

Medium-sized tomato, finely chopped: 1

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Coriander powder: 1 tsp

Salt: to taste

Method

- Wash the drumsticks, string them and cut into 3" pieces.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the cumin seeds and garlic and sauté for 1 minute.

To season

- Mix in the tomatoes and sauté, till they soften.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders with 2 tbsp of water and mix well. Sauté for 2-3 minutes.

To cook the drumsticks

- Add the drumsticks, season them with salt, cover the pan and simmer, till they are tender but firm.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve with hot Kadhi Badi (Curd Curry with Gram Flour Dumplings; [p. 74](#)) and steamed rice.

THE SIZZLING SAAGS OF BIHAR

When you think of spinach, don't you think of Popeye, the cartoon character? That's who my father would refer to while trying to convince me how crucial spinach is for healthy living. As most of us know, it is rich in iron, thus Popeye's bulging muscles! But more often than not, it does not score well with children. While growing up, I also didn't much care about spinach. But then, I had not explored it in a Bhojpuri kitchen as yet.

In Bihar and Jharkhand, saag is a regular feature on the table. Palak (spinach), methi (fenugreek greens) or chana ka saag (green gram) is cooked during festivals like Chhath as well. My husband's love for the saag is what made me venture into this leafy green world and ask around for authentic recipes. His love for this vegetable is actually linked to an interesting story. As a kid, he was also averse to saag, mostly due to peer pressure. However, his grandfather decided to get this out of his head. So one Sunday morning, he took him to a sabji mandi (vegetable market) in Patna. While shopping for different types of saag, his grandfather taught him about their various health benefits. My husband returned home sufficiently inspired, but waited till lunch time to see if his grandfather's advice had worked on him or not. At lunch time, he asked for some saag and rice, and ever since has never looked back. Today, every time he eats saag, it reminds him of his wonderful grandfather. It amazes me how many of our most vivid childhood memories revolve around food. Bhojpuri kitchens have passed on many such traditions quite effectively from one generation to another— saag being one of them.



SAAG CHANA
Spinach with Bengal Gram

LAAL SAAG
Red Amaranth Leaves



SAAG CHANA

Spinach with Bengal Gram

A very tasteful combination of spinach and whole Bengal gram (kala chana), Saag Chana is a staple dish in every Bhojpuri kitchen. It scores on all health parameters and is also light to digest. It is prepared with a tempering of mustard seeds, dried red chillies and fenugreek seeds, and a base of onion and tomato. You can make it with any leaf of your choice such as, laal saag (red amaranth), or methi ka saag (fenugreek greens), but traditionally it's made with palak or hara saag (spinach).

The best part of this dish is that it's easy and quick to whip up with super delicious results.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

Whole Bengal gram (kala chana): 1 cup

Spinach: 400 g

For the tempering

Sunflower oil: 2 tbsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chillies, roughly torn: 2

For the seasoning

Ginger, peeled and grated: 1 tsp

Method

To cook the gram

- Wash the gram and soak it in water overnight.
- Drain and rinse thoroughly.
- Cook the gram with water to cover in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 10-15 minutes (2-3 whistles).

Garlic, peeled and finely chopped: 1 tsp

Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Medium-sized tomato, finely chopped: 1

Salt: to taste

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

To serve

Lime juice: ½ tsp

Ghee: 1 tbsp

- Open the cooker after it reaches room temperature.
- Drain the gram and set aside.

To prepare the spinach

- Wash the spinach in several changes of water. Drain and chop it.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the fenugreek seeds, mustard seeds and red chillies and let them crackle.

To season

- Add the ginger and garlic and sauté, till the raw smell of the garlic disappears.
- Add the onion and sauté, till pink.
- Mix in the tomato, season lightly and sauté, till it softens.
- Sprinkle in the spice powders and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

To complete the dish

- Spoon in the gram and spinach, season to taste and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring continuously, till the spinach wilts.

To serve

- Remove from heat, drizzle with lime juice and add a dollop of ghee. Mix well.
- Spoon into a serving dish and

.....

serve hot with hot rotis or
parathas.

LAAL SAAG

Red Amaranth leaves

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Red amaranth leaves (laal saag):
about 200 g

For the tempering

Mustard oil: 1 tbsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Garlic cloves, peeled and kept
whole: 2-3

Dried red chillie, broken into small
pieces: 1

For the seasoning

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Salt: to taste

Garam masala powder: 1 tsp

To serve

Lime juice: ½ tsp

Ghee: 1 tbsp

Method

To prepare the amaranth leaves

- Wash the amaranth leaves in several changes of water. Drain.
- Chop off and discard the hard stems. Chop the leaves and tender stems roughly.

To temper

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Add the whole spices, garlic and red chilli and let them crackle.

To season

- Mix in the turmeric powder and the amaranth.
- Season with salt and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Cover the pan and cook, till the leaves wilt. It will be reduced to about half of its original

quantity.

To serve

- Spoon into a serving dish and serve laalsaag with steamed rice and daal.

Variations

Methi ka Saag (Fenugreek Greens): Use fenugreek leaves (methi ka saag) instead of amaranth leaves. Apart from Methi, there are four types of saags that are cooked in the same manner. These are : Poi ka Saag (Basella Alba), Noni ka Saag (Wild Purslane), Bhatuye ka Saag (Chenopodium album) and Chana ka Saag (Chickpea Leaves).

Methi Mattar Aaloo (Fenugreek Greens with Potatoes and Green Peas): Add 1 peeled and chopped potato after the turmeric powder and sauté till it is tender. Add ½ cup of shelled green peas and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Then add the fenugreek leaves and continue as given.

PICKLES, CHUTNEYS & OTHER ACCOMPANIMENTS

Can you imagine your pulao without a raita, your khichdi without papad, or your idlis without coconut chutney? I bet they wouldn't taste half as good without these accompaniments. No matter which part of India you belong to, your food has to be accompanied by those zingy, punchy pickles and chutneys. Bhojpuri kitchens are no different. The food scene across Bihar and Jharkhand is made more colourful and vibrant by the presence of a wide range of accompaniments which add that extra punch.

Sometimes the love for a pickle, papad or chutney supersedes the love for the main course. Quite literally, some meals revolve around the accompaniment rather than the other way around. For example, there is a tradition in Bihar that khichdi can never be eaten without its five brothers: Aam ka Achaar (Mango Pickle; [p. 127](#)), Tilauri (Sundried Sesame Cakes), papad, Dhania ki Chutney (Fresh Coriander Chutney; [p. 129](#)) and Sattu ka Chokha (Spiced Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 134](#)). In my family, eating a paratha for breakfast is sometimes just an excuse for trying out the new Bharwan Laal Murcha ka Achaar (Stuffed Red Chilli Pickle; [p. 125](#)) sent by Nani from Delhi.

A few accompaniments like Oal ki Chutney (Yam Chutney; [p. 128](#)), Teesi ki Chutney (Flaxseed Chutney; [p. 124](#)) and Sattu ka Chokha are very special to the Bhojpuri kitchen with the recipes handed down from one generation to the next. Along with being a 'fun-partner' to your main course, these accompaniments have numerous health benefits too. For instance, I am not very fond of eating plain teesi which, by the way, is highly recommended by dieticians and nutritionists. But since I have discovered Teesi ki Chutney, I cannot have enough of it. My dietician has also adopted the recipe and is now recommending it to all her clients!

I always insist on adding several accompaniments to my menu because not only are they easy to prepare, but they make the table look full. For us in the Sahay household, they are more important than the main dishes, because no matter how good your pakodas or kababs may be, if there is no chutney on the table, then an integral part of the food is considered missing.



[SAEM KA ACHAAR](#)
[Flat Fava Bean Pickle](#)

[KATHAL KA ACHAAR](#)
[Jackfruit Pickle](#)

[NEEMBU KA ACHAAR](#)
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[HARI MIRCH AUR ADARAK KA ACHAAR](#)
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[TEESI KI CHUTNEY](#)
[Flaxseed Chutney](#)

[BHARWAN LAAL MURCHA KA ACHAAR](#)
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[DAHIWALA MURCHA](#)
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[OAL KI CHUTNEY](#)
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[Fresh Mint and Coriander Chutney](#)

[LEHSUNIYA HARI CHUTNEY](#)
[Garlic and Fresh Coriander Chutney](#)

[IMLI KI CHUTNEY](#)
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[BAINGAN KA CHOKHA](#)
[Roasted Aubergine Mash](#)

[SATTU KA CHOKHA](#)
[Spiced Roasted Gram Flour](#)

[AALOO KA CHOKHA](#)
[Spiced Potato Mash](#)

[BHINDI KA CHOKHA](#)
[Roasted Okra Mash](#)



SAEM KA ACHAAR

Flat Fava Bean Pickle

Makes: about 25 g

Shelf life: about 4 weeks

Preparation time: 1 hour

Time for the pickle to mature: about 4 days

Ingredients

Flat fava beans (saem): 250 g

For the seasoning

Yellow mustard, powdered: 1½ tbsp

Fennel seeds (saunf): 1 tbsp

Turmeric powder: ½ tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Asafoetida powder (hing): a pinch

Salt: to taste

Mustard oil: ½ cup

Method

To prepare the beans

- Wash the beans and drain. Trim and string them. Cut the beans into 1" pieces.
- Boil water in a large pan. Add the beans and blanch them for 2-3 minutes. Drain and place in a colander, till the water dries out completely.
- Spread the beans on a cotton cloth and place them under the sun for around 45-60 minutes. Make sure that the beans are completely dried.
- Put the beans in a large bowl.

To season

- Mix the seasoning ingredients in a small bowl and add it to the beans.
- Mix well, preferably with your hands, but gently (use gloves),

till the beans are evenly coated.

To store

- Transfer to an airtight, sterilized jar and leave it in the sun for 4 days before use.
- Enjoy the achaar with delicious Sattu ka Paratha (Flatbread stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour; [p. 22](#)).

KATHAL KA ACHAAR

Jackfruit Pickle

Makes: about 600 g

Shelf life: 1 year

Preparation time: 1 hour

Time for the pickle to mature: 5-6 days

Ingredients

Jackfruit, peeled and cut into chunks: 1 kg

Salt: 20 g

For the seasoning

Turmeric powder: 25 g

Mustard seeds, powdered: 100 g

Red chilli powder: 30 g

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): 1 tbsp

Asafoetida powder (hing): 1 tsp

Salt: 60 g

To cover the pickle

Mustard oil: 500 ml

Method

To prepare the jackfruit

- Put enough water to cover the jackfruit into a large pan and bring it to a boil.
- Add 20 g of salt to the jackfruit. Let it come to a boil again.
- Remove from heat and drain thoroughly. Set aside to cool completely.

To season

- Mix the spice powders and remaining salt in a small bowl.
- Add it to the jackfruit and mix with your hands till the jackfruit is evenly coated.

To store

- Heat the mustard oil in a pan over high heat, till it smokes.
- Remove from heat and let it cool. (You may omit this step if

you like the flavour of mustard oil.)

- Transfer the jackfruit to an airtight, sterilized jar.
- Pour the cooled oil over the jackfruit and place in the sun for 5-6 days before use.
- Make sure that the jackfruit is completely covered with the oil. Add more if required.

NEEMBU KA ACHAAR

Lime Pickle

Makes: about 500 g

Preparation time: 1 hour

Shelf life: about 1 year

Time for the pickle to mature: 20 days

Ingredients

Limes: 10-12

For the seasoning

Ajwain (carom seeds): 1 tsp

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 1 tsp

Black salt (kala namak): 1 tsp

Salt: ½ tsp

For storing the pickle

1 tsp extra salt

Method

To prepare the limes

- Wash the limes and dry them thoroughly with kitchen towels. There should be no moisture on them.
- Reserve 4 limes and cut the remaining into quarters.
- Cut the reserved limes in half and squeeze out the juice into a bowl.
- Put the quartered limes in a large bowl.

To season

- Mix all the ingredients for the seasoning in a small bowl.
- Rub it into the limes along with the lime juice, till the limes are evenly coated.

To store

- Put 1 tsp of salt into an airtight, sterilized jar. Fill the jar with

the limes.

- Close the jar and cover with a cloth. Let it stand for a minimum of 20 days in the sun before use.

HARI MIRCH AUR ADARAK KA ACHAAR

Green Chilli and Ginger Pickle

Makes: about 250 g
Shelf life: about 1 year

Preparation time: 1 hour
Time for the pickle to mature: 3-4 days

Ingredients

Green chillies, trimmed and chopped into 1" pieces: 1 cup.

Ginger, peeled and chopped into ½" pieces: 5" - 6" piece

For the seasoning

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Yellow mustard, powdered: 2 tbsp

Black salt (kala namak): 1 tsp

Salt: ½ tsp

Lime juice: 2 tbsp

For covering the pickle

Mustard oil: ½ cup

Method

- Make sure there's no moisture on the green chillies and ginger before chopping them.
- Put them in a bowl.

To season

- Mix the dry ingredients for the seasoning in a small bowl.
- Add it to the chillies and ginger with the lime juice and mix, till the chillies and ginger are well coated.

To store

- Heat the mustard oil in a pan over high heat, till it smokes.
- Remove from heat and let it cool. (You may omit this step if you like the flavour of mustard oil.)

- Transfer the chillies and ginger to an airtight, sterilized jar.
- Pour the cooled oil over the chillies and ginger and place in the sun for 3-4 days before use.
- Make sure that the pickle is completely covered with the oil. Add more if required.

TEESI KI CHUTNEY

Flaxseed Chutney

Makes: about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Serves: 2

Ingredients

For dry-roasting

Flaxseeds (teesi): 1 cup

Coriander seeds: 2 tbsp

Dried red chillies: 2-3

For the other seasoning

Lime juice: 2 tbsp

Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

Cumin powder: 1 tsp

Method

To dry-roast

- Put a tava or griddle over low heat.
- Add the flaxseeds and roast them, stirring continuously, for 4-5 minutes.
- Remove and transfer to a flat plate.
- Add the coriander seeds and red chillies to the tava or griddle and roast them over low heat, stirring continuously for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the coriander seeds and chillies to the flaxseeds and set aside, till cool.

To complete the chutney

- Grind the roasted spices to make a smooth powder.
- Transfer to a bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and mix, till well blended.

BHARWAN LAAL MURCHA KA ACHAAR

Stuffed Red Chilli Pickle

Make sure you are wearing double gloves while making these.

Makes: about 500 g

Shelf life: about 1 year

Preparation time: 1 hour

Time for the pickle to mature: 3-4 days

Ingredients

Large red chillies: 500 g

For the filling

Fennel seeds (saunf): 2 tbsp

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana),
powdered: 2 tbsp

Turmeric powder: 2 tbsp

Yellow mustard, powdered: 3 tbsp

Dried mango powder (aamchoor): 2
tbsp

Black salt (kala namak): 2 tbsp

Salt: 1 tbsp

Mustard oil: 3-4 tbsp

For covering the pickle

Mustard oil: enough to cover the
chillies

Method

To prepare the chillies

- Wash the chillies and pat dry. Put them under the sun for 2-3 hours to dry out thoroughly.
- Chop off the stems and slit them halfway down. Be careful not to separate the pieces.
- Remove the flesh and seeds from inside the chillies and collect them in a large bowl.

To stuff the chillies

- Add all the ingredients for the filling to the bowl. Put on your gloves and mix well with your hands.
- Stuff this mixture inside the red

chillies.

To store

- Put the chillies into an airtight, sterilized jar.
- Heat enough oil to cover the chillies, till it smokes. Remove from heat and set aside till it cools completely. (You may omit this step if you like the flavour of mustard oil.)
- Pour the cooled oil over the chillies and let it stand in the sun for 3-4 days before use.

DAHIWALA MURCHA

Green Chillies Pickled with Curd

Makes: about 200 g

Shelf life: about 1-2 months

Preparation time: 1 hour

Time for the pickle to mature: 2-3 days

Ingredients

Green chillies: 10

For the filling

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 2 tsp

Coriander powder: 2 tsp

Salt: ½ tsp

For frying the chillies

Oil: to deep-fry

To complete the pickle

Whisked curd: 1 cup

Method

To prepare the chillies

- Wash the green chillies and dry thoroughly. Slit them halfway down. Be careful not to separate the pieces.

To stuff the chillies

- Mix the spice powders and salt in a small bowl.
- Stuff the spices into the chillies.

To fry the chillies

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Deep-fry the chillies for 2-3 minutes, till they are golden.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

To complete the pickle

- Put the curd in a large bowl with 2 tbsp of water. Whisk, till

well blended.

- Add the fried chillies and cover the bowl. Let them soak in the curd for 2 days.
- Remove the chillies from the curd and spread them on a large platter.
- Cover with a cloth and leave them in the sun, till they are dry.

To store

- Store in an airtight, sterilized jar.
- Enjoy with Laukiwali Geeli Khichdi (Bottle Gourd Rice Porridge; [p. 15](#)), Tehri (Vegetable Pulao; [p. 13](#)) and Vegetable Pakoda (Vegetable Fritters; [p. 39](#)).

AAM KA ACHAAR

Mango Pickle

Makes: about 1 kg

Shelf life: about 1 year

Preparation time: 2 hours

Time for the pickle to mature: 7-9 days

Ingredients

Small raw mangoes: 20

For the seasoning

Fenugreek seeds (methi dana): 5
tbsp

Fennel seeds (saunf): 8-10 tbsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): 5 tbsp

Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: 2 tbsp

Yellow mustard, powdered: 6 tbsp

Salt: 3 tbsp

For covering the pickle

Mustard oil: enough to cover the
pickle

Method

To prepare the mangoes

- Wash the mangoes and wipe dry. Make sure there's no moisture in the mangoes.
- Dice the mangoes and discard the seeds.
- Put the mangoes in a large bowl.

To season

- Mix the ingredients for the seasoning in a small bowl and add them to the mangoes.
- Put on a pair of gloves and mix with your hands, till the mangoes are evenly coated.

To store

- Transfer the mangoes to an airtight, sterilized jar and keep under the sun for 2-3 days.
- After 2-3 days, heat enough

mustard oil to cover the mangoes, till it smokes. Remove from heat and set aside till it cools completely. (You may omit this step if you like the flavour of mustard oil.)

- Pour the cooled oil over the mangoes.
- Store in a cool, dry place for a minimum of 5-6 days before use.

OAL KI CHUTNEY

Yam Chutney

Serves: 5-6

Makes: about 200 g

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Time for the chutney to mature: 2 days

Ingredients

Yam (oal/suran/jimikand): 250 g

Salt: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Yellow mustard, powdered: ½ tbsp

Green chillies, finely chopped: 2

Grated ginger: 1 tsp

Garlic, finely chopped: 1 tsp

Lime juice: 1 lime

Ajwain: ½ tsp

Nigella seeds (kalaunji): ½ tsp

Mustard oil: 2 tbsp

Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Method

To prepare the yam

- Peel the yam and wash thoroughly. Chop it roughly.
- Cook the yam with the salt and enough water to cover in a pressure cooker over high heat. After the cooker reaches full pressure (first whistle), lower the heat and cook for another 5 minutes (1 whistle). Open the cooker after it cools to room temperature.
- Remove the yam and place in a colander to drain off the water.
- Transfer the yam to a bowl.

To season

- Put the ingredients for the seasoning in a small bowl and mix well.
- Add it to the yam and mix, till the yam is well coated.

- Adjust the seasoning.
- Store the chutney in an airtight, sterilized jar for a minimum of 2 days before use.

DHANIA KI CHUTNEY

Fresh Coriander Chutney

Makes: about 100 g

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Fresh coriander leaves: 200 g
Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped:
½” piece
Lime juice: ½ a lime
Cumin powder: ½ tsp
Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Method

- Wash the coriander and pluck out the leaves. Discard the stems.
- Put all the ingredients into a grinder, add 1-2 tbsp of water and blitz to make a smooth paste.
- Transfer to a bowl and serve.
- It goes well with, Vegetable Pakoda (Vegetable Fritters; [p. 39](#)), Bachka (Bengal Gram Fritters; [p. 34](#)), Papra (Gram Flour Crêpes; [p. 32](#)), Bread Pakoda (Bread Fritters; [p. 37](#)), Litti Chokha (Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p. 4](#)), and sometimes with sandwiches too.

PUDINA AUR DHANIA KI CHUTNEY

Fresh Mint and Coriander Chutney

Makes: about 200 g

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Fresh mint leaves: 200 g
Fresh coriander leaves: 100 g
Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped:
½” piece
Lime juice: ½ a lime
Cumin powder: ½ tsp
Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Method

- Wash the coriander and mint and pluck out the leaves. Discard the stems.
- Put all the ingredients into a grinder, add 1-2 tbsp of water and blitz to make a smooth paste.
- Transfer to a bowl and serve.
- It goes well with Vegetable Pakodas (Vegetable Fritters; [p. 39](#)), Bachka (Bengal Gram Fritters; [p. 34](#)), Papra (Gram Flour Crêpes; [p. 32](#)), Bread Pakoda (Bread Fritters; [p. 37](#)) and Litti Chokha (Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p. 4](#)).

LEHSUNIYA HARI CHUTNEY

Garlic and Fresh Coriander Chutney

Makes: about 300 g

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Fresh coriander leaves: 300 g
Fresh mint leaves: 300 g
Garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped: 2-3
Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped: ½” piece
Lime juice: ½ a lime
Cumin powder: ½ tsp
Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Method

- Wash the coriander leaves and mint and pluck out the leaves. Discard the stems.
- Put all the ingredients into a grinder, add 1-2 tbsp of water and blitz to make a smooth paste.
- Transfer to a bowl and serve.
- It goes well with Vegetable Pakodas (Vegetable Fritters; [p. 39](#)), Bachka (Bengal Gram Fritters; [p. 34](#)), Papra (Gram Flour Crêpes; [p. 32](#)), Bread Pakoda (Bread Fritters; [p. 37](#)) and Litti Chokha (Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p. 4](#)) and sometimes with sandwiches too.

IMLI KI CHUTNEY

Tamarind Chutney

Makes: about 200 g

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

Tamarind, without seeds and fibres:
1 cup

Cumin powder: 1 tsp

Ginger powder (saunth): 1 tsp

Red chilli powder: ½ tsp

Jaggery (gud), roughly chopped: ½
cup or to taste

Black salt (kala namak): to taste

Powdered green cardamom: ½ tsp

Method

To prepare the tamarind

- Put the tamarind in a bowl, cover it with water and let it soak overnight.
- Transfer the soaked tamarind to a pan over moderate heat. Bring it to a boil and immediately remove from heat.
- Press the tamarind through a strainer into a heavy-based pan. Discard the residue in the strainer.
- Put the pan over moderate heat.

To cook the chutney

- Add the jaggery and about ½ cup of water. Cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring all the while, till the jaggery dissolves and the chutney is reduced.
- Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Boil for 4-5 minutes longer to get a medium to thick consistency.

- Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

To serve

- Transfer to a serving bowl and enjoy the chutney with Singhada (Potato-stuffed Pastries; [p. 48](#)), Kachodi (Stuffed Fritters) and Bachkas (Bengal Gram Fritters; [p. 34](#)).

BAINGAN KA CHOKHA

Roasted Aubergine Mash

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the aubergine

Large purple aubergine (baingan): 1

Refined oil: 1 tsp

For the seasoning

Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1

Green chillies, finely chopped: 2-3

Garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped: 2-3

Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp

Salt: to taste

Lime juice: 1 tbsp

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

To prepare the aubergine

- Wash the aubergine and pat dry.
- Spread 1 tsp of oil over the aubergine.
- Roast it directly on a low flame till the skin blackens. Keep turning it around. To check if it is tender, insert a fork into it. It should pierce the aubergine easily.
- Soak the aubergine in water and let it cool.
- Remove from the water and peel off the skin.

To make the mash

- Chop the aubergine flesh and put it into a bowl.
- Add the remaining ingredients and mix well.
- Enjoy it with hot Littis (Wheat Flour Balls stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p. 4](#)).

SATTU KA CHOKHA

Spiced Roasted Gram Flour

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Roasted gram flour (sattu): 100 g
Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: ½
Green chillies, finely chopped: 2
Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp
Salt or black salt (kala namak): to taste
Dried mango powder (aamchoor): ½ tsp
Mustard oil: 2 tsp

Method

- Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Adjust the seasoning.
- This dish goes very well with hot parathas.

AALOO KA CHOKHA

Spiced Potato Mash

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the potato mash

Medium-sized potatoes: 2-3

Ginger, grated: ½ tsp

Medium-sized onion peeled and finely chopped: 1

Green chillies, finely chopped: 2

Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp

Salt or black salt (kala namak): to taste

Lime juice: 1 tbsp

Mustard oil: 2 tsp

For the tempering

Oil: 1 tsp

Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

Dried red chilli: 1

Method

To make the mash

- Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets, till tender.
- Peel and mash them in a bowl, while still hot.
- Add all the other ingredients for the potato mash and mix, till well blended.

To temper

- Put the oil in a small pan over moderate heat.
- Add the mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add the cumin seeds and red chilli.
- Remove from heat and pour this delicious, earthy tempering over the chokha.

BHINDI KA CHOKHA

Roasted Okra Mash

Serves: 2

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

Okra/lady's finger (bhindi): 5-6
Refined oil: 1 tsp
Salt or black salt (kala namak): to taste
Ginger, grated: ¼ tsp
Medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped: 1
Green chillies, finely chopped: 2
Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped: 1 tbsp
Lime juice: 1 tbsp
Mustard oil: ½ tsp

Method

To prepare the okra

- Wash the okra and dry immediately in kitchen towels.
- Rub the oil and a pinch of salt over the okra.
- Roast the okra on a gas flame or put them on a baking tray in an oven preheated to 180°C for about 10 minutes, till they start to turn slightly black. Keep turning the okra while roasting them.

To make the mash

- Put the okra on a plate and with the help of a spatula, mash them well.
- Add the remaining ingredients and mix, till well blended.
- Enjoy with hot rotis.

INDULGENT SWEETS

My husband and my mother-in-law love sweets and no matter how good the starters or the main course is, after every meal you can hear them say, ‘Kuch meetha ho jayé?’ (Can we have something sweet?) On some nights, I manage to sway them away by lecturing aggressively, I might add, about the disadvantages of eating so much sweet. But like kids, both of them start throwing tantrums. Sometimes my husband takes it to another level and says things like, ‘Tum toh chahti hi nahi ho ki hum khush rahein,’ (You don’t want me to be happy.) Imagine what I have to go through, that too not over a critical life-changing decision, but just over a sweet dish. That’s how much Biharis love their sweets! Be it the Khaja (Sugar-glazed Pastries; [p. 142](#)) to Boondi (Gram Flour Drops; [p. 162](#)). The recipes in this section are about such irresistible, naughty sweet treats and I accept, which we perhaps cannot do without. They are also great mood-lifters on days when nothing seems to go right. So, enjoy the comforting, and sweet world of the Bhojpuri kitchen.



PARWAL KI MITHAI
Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd

KHAJA
Sugar-glazed Pastries

ANARSA
Rice Flour and Jaggery Dumplings

BALUSHAHI
Sugar-glazed Doughnuts

MAKHANÉ KI KHEER
Foxnut Porridge

TIL KÉ LADDOO
Sesame Seed and Jaggery Sweet

KAALA JAMUN
Cottage Cheese Dumplings in Sugar Syrup

THEKUA
Sweet Wheat Flour Fritters

PEDAKIYA
Stuffed Sweet Dumplings

MAAL PUA
Sweet Pancakes

GUDWALA PUA

Jaggery and Wheat Flour Pancakes

KHURMA

Sugar-glazed Pastry

LATTHO

Jaggery-glazed Gram Flour Strings

BOONDI

Gram Flour Drops



PARWAL KI MITHAI

Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd

So here we were in Patliputra Colony, Patna, enjoying Shanu Bhaiyya's wedding; a typical day with everyone chattering, singing and enjoying delicious traditional wedding snacks. Then suddenly someone served me Parwal ki Mithai and my jaw literally dropped! I was blown away instantly! Until then I could only imagine it as a vegetable, never as a dessert.

There was no way I could let it go out of my mind, and decided to learn how to make it. I requested my father-in-law who took me to his friend's sweetmeat shop. That day was special — I was in my own little Disneyland. The dexterity of the halwais left me in total awe. I joined them to learn one dish, but came back learning three.

What was most touching was the way the halwais went out of their way to explain the recipes, its intricacies and openly shared their special mantras and secrets. They first taught me how to poach the parwal pieces in sugar syrup and leave it to soak for a while. It is this process which makes it similar in taste and texture to gulkand (rose petal preserve). Parwal ki mithai is actually like a gulkand candy stuffed with a contrasting unsweetened creamy khoya/mawa (milk solids) filling. Slightly complex, yet brilliant in flavour!

Serves: 5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

Parwal (pointed gourd): 250 g
For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Method

To prepare the gourds

- Clean the gourds, chop off both

Granulated sugar: 2 cups

Water: 1 cup

For the stuffing

Milk solids (khoya /mawa): 100 g

Milk powder: 25 g

Powdered green cardamom: ¼ tsp

Seedless raisins: a few

Almonds, finely chopped: 3 tbsp

ends and peel them.

- Make a slit along the centre of the gourds and scoop out the flesh, to make space for the filling.
- Boil water in a pan over high heat and blanch the gourds for 5-6 minutes.
- Drain thoroughly and leave them in a colander, till the water is totally drained off.

To prepare the chashni (sugar syrup)

- Put the sugar and water in a deep, heavy-based pan. Simmer, stirring occasionally, till the sugar is completely dissolved.
- Continue cooking for about 10 minutes without stirring, till the syrup reduces. Your chashni is now ready.

To poach the gourds

- Add the blanched gourds to the syrup and simmer, till they become translucent.
- Remove from heat, cover the pan and set aside for the gourds to absorb the syrup.

To make the filling

- Put the khoya in a shallow pan over low heat and sauté, till it becomes slightly golden.
- Transfer to a bowl and set aside to cool.

- Add the remaining ingredients for the filling and mix well.

To complete the dish

- Remove the gourds from the syrup and stuff them with the filling.

KHAJA

Sugar-glazed Pastries

Crunchy delectable layers of pastry dough deep-fried to get that lovely golden colour and taste, and then glazed with sugar syrup!

Khaja is a complete work of art and its name truly sums it up. You may have heard many jokes about the word, 'kha ja' which literally translates in English into 'eat it'. Trust me, it is so irresistible that once you have had one, you shall proceed to eat many!

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 1 kg + extra to dust

Salt: a pinch

Powdered sugar: 325 g

Ghee: 200 g

For the natural glue

Ghee: 2 tbsp

Refined flour (maida): 4 tbsp

For frying the khaja

Ghee: to deep-fry

For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Sugar: 600 g

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour and salt into a large bowl.
- Mix in the sugar.
- Add the ghee and mix well with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Sprinkle in 2-3 tbsp of water and knead to form a smooth, pliable dough. Cover the dough and set aside to rest for 15-20 minutes.

To prepare the natural glue

Water: 300 ml

- Put the ghee and flour in a small bowl and whisk, till smooth. The glue is ready.

To make the khaja

- Make balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls.
- Roll 3 balls into thin discs.
- Dust a little flour on your work surface and place a disc on it. Spread the natural glue on top and cover with a second disc. Repeat with the third disc.
- Spread some more glue over the third disc and roll the stack of discs into a cylinder.
- Cut the cylinder into ½” pieces. You should be able to see the multiple layers inside each piece.
- Roll each piece gently into 3”-4” discs.
- Repeat, till all the dough has been used.

To fry the khaja

- Melt the ghee in a wok over moderate heat.
- Reduce the heat and deep-fry the khajas in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess ghee.
- Let them cool for 4-5 minutes.

To prepare the chashni

- See Parwal ki Mithai

(Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd; [p. 140](#)).

- Let the chashni cool for 5-6 minutes.

To complete the dish

- Submerge the khaja into the chashni and leave for about 5 minutes.
- Remove with a spatula and arrange on a serving plate.

ANARSA

Rice Flour and Jaggery Dumplings

Sweet, deep-fried dumplings made with a dough of powdered rice and jaggery, Anarsa is made during the festival of Diwali.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Rice: 150 g

Jaggery (gud), grated: 50 g

Milk: 2-3 tbsp

Ghee: 1-2 tbsp

For the coating

Sesame seeds: 2-3 tbsp

For frying the anarsas

Ghee: to deep-fry

Method

To make the rice flour

- Wash the rice and keep it soaked for 3 days, changing the water every day.
- After 3 days, drain the rice completely. Spread it on a plate and let it dry for 1 hour.
- Put the dried rice in a mixer grinder to make a fine powder.

To knead the dough

- Put the rice flour in a bowl, add the jaggery and ghee and mix with your fingers, till well blended.
- Add the milk and knead to form a soft dough.
- Make balls with the dough about the size of golf balls.

To coat the anarsas

- Spread the sesame seeds on a plate and roll the balls over them to coat them.

To fry the anarsas

- Put the ghee in a wok over moderate heat.
- Lower the heat and fry the anarsas in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess ghee.

BALUSHAHI

Sugar-glazed Doughnuts

Whether you are from the southern, northern, eastern or western part of India, no one is a stranger to the regal Balushahi! My three-year-old niece would refer to them as 'Indian doughnuts', but call it by any name, the sweet tastes as good as ever.

One of the most popular stories in my family revolves around my Nana's everlasting love for balushahis. Once, as a young couple, my Nana and Nani were travelling by bus to attend a family function. On the way, at one of the stops, my Nana sighted delicious balushahis in a halwai shop. Unable to resist the temptation, he got off the bus to buy a few for himself and his wife. While he was absorbed in buying his favourite balushahis, the bus had started to move and he began running behind it holding the balushahis in his hands.

By now, my frantic Nani had created enough noise to have the bus stopped for her husband who was running behind it with balushahis! When my Nana managed to clamber up the bus, a livid Nani decided to give him a piece of her mind, 'Hum chhoot jayé toh koi baat nahi, aapki balushahi nahi chhootni chahiyé, hai na?' (If I had gotten left behind, it wouldn't have mattered, but you couldn't resist the balushahis, isn't it?) That is the magic of this wonder of a dessert, which can make a man run for it for miles and miles!

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

Method

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 1 kg

Baking soda: 1 tsp

Salt: a pinch

Ghee: 300 g

Chilled, whisked curd: 125 g/1 cup

For frying the balushahi

Ghee: to deep-fry

For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Sugar: 1 kg

Water: 500 g

For the garnish

Peeled and chopped pistachio nuts and almonds

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour, baking soda and salt into a bowl.
- Add the ghee and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add the curd and 1-2 tbsp of water.
- Knead gently just to bring everything together. Don't overwork the dough. If you do, you will get hard balushahis instead of soft, crumbly, flaky ones.
- Cover the dough with a cloth and set aside to rest for 10-15 minutes.

To shape the balushahis

- Make balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls. They shouldn't be too big or else they won't cook down to the core.
- Flatten the balls slightly between the palms of your hands.
- And with the help of your thumb, make a dent in the centre.

To fry the balushahis

- Put the ghee in a wok over moderate heat.
- Lower the heat and fry the balushahis in batches, till they are golden brown. Keep flipping them over.

- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess ghee.
- Arrange on a tray and let them cool down.

To prepare the chashni

- See, Parwal ki Mithai (Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd; [p. 140](#)). Let the chashni cool for 5-6 minutes.

To complete the dish

- Add the balushahis to the tepid chashni and let them soak for 4-5 minutes.
- Remove with a spatula and arrange them on a serving plate.
- Garnish with chopped pistachio nuts and almonds.
- Set aside at room temperature for some time before serving.

MAKHANÉ KI KHEER

Foxnut Porridge

Of all the porridges that I have ever had, Makhané ki Kheer is definitely one of my favourites. Makhana, which is readily available all across Bihar and Jharkhand, is possibly the cheapest available dry fruit in these two states and hence is used in several dishes. I have often seen people nibbling on ghee-roasted makhana with their evening tea as well.

It is light and easy on the stomach, and that is the reason its kheer is made while observing fasts, and offered as prasad to the gods. The best part is that it's very easy to whip up, with delicious results.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

Ghee: 2-3 tbsp

Foxnuts (makhana): 1½ cups

Milk: 3 cups

Powdered green cardamom: ½ tsp

Saffron strands: a pinch

Sugar: 6-7 tbsp

Method

To fry the foxnuts

- Melt the ghee in a shallow pan over moderate heat.
- Reduce the heat, add the foxnuts and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl. Set aside.

To cook the porridge

- Put the milk in a deep pan over high heat and let it come to a boil.

- Reduce the heat and add the cardamom powder, saffron and sugar.
- Stir in the foxnuts and simmer for 8-10 minutes, stirring all the while to prevent the milk from sticking to the bottom of the pan.

TIL KÉ LADDOO

Sesame Seed and Jaggery Sweet

What tiramisu is to Italy, til (sesame seed) desserts are to Bihar, especially the most famous one, Til ké Laddoo. It is made during winter around the festival of Makar Sankranti and the streets of Bihar are filled with vendors selling this delicious sweet. Much like tiramisu, tilkut is also a pick-me-up dessert. That's why it is most preferred with a cup of morning tea. Its two main ingredients, sesame seeds and jaggery are known to immediately infuse warmth and energy into the blood stream and also help in fighting the harsh cold winter mornings.

While tilkut may be a little difficult to prepare at home, but here's a recipe for til ké laddoo that is a perfect substitute for tilkut and is also easy to make.

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

White sesame seeds (safed til): 250 g
Peanuts, shelled and peeled: 100 g
Ghee: 3-4 tbsp
Jaggery (gud), roughly chopped: 350 g

Method

To roast the sesame seeds and peanuts

- Put a wok over low heat. Add the sesame seeds and roast them, stirring continuously, till they turn a very light shade of golden brown. Be careful not to turn them dark brown.
- Transfer to a tray and set aside to cool.
- Add the peanuts to the pan and

roast, stirring all the while, till they are golden brown.

- Transfer to another tray and set aside to cool.
- Once cool, crush the peanuts coarsely in a mortar and pestle.

To make the laddoo mix

- Melt the ghee in a wok over low heat.
- Add the jaggery and let it melt. Keep stirring continuously.
- Remove the pan from heat and set aside for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the sesame seeds and peanuts and mix with a spatula, till well blended. Your laddoo mixture is ready.

To shape the laddoos

- Transfer the mixture to a plate and let it cool for 4-5 minutes. It shouldn't be that hot that it burns your hands, nor should it be too cold, or else the mixture won't get moulded into laddoos.
- Shape the mixture into balls about the size of golf balls

KAALA JAMUN

Cottage Cheese Dumplings in Sugar Syrup

In Madhya Pradesh where I grew up, I was familiar with its less dark counterpart, the gulab jamun. Apart from the obvious colour difference, the other distinct feature of the Kaala Jamun from Bihar is that it is crispier than its cousin from the neighbouring state. The reason being that it's fried over low heat for a little longer than the regular gulab jamun to get that extra dark brown colour. And when this crispy-skinned kaala jamun is dipped in sugar syrup, it becomes a big volcano of flavours. To add more flavours and richness, I sometimes top it up with fresh cream.

Serves: 3-4

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Cottage cheese (paneer): 75 g

Milk solids (khoya/mawa): 200 g

Refined flour (maida): 35 g

For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Granulated sugar: 500 g

Water: 250 ml

Powdered green cardamom: ½ tsp

For frying the kaala jamun

Ghee: to deep-fry

Method

To knead the dough

- Put the cottage cheese in a plate and mash it completely with your hands.
- Add the khoya and flour and mix thoroughly, till well blended.
- Knead lightly to make a very smooth dough.

To prepare the chashni

- Put the sugar, water and cardamom powder in a deep,

heavy-based pan over moderate heat. Stir, till the sugar dissolves.

- Simmer for a further 10 minutes without stirring, to reduce the syrup.

To shape the kaala jamuns

- Make balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls.

To fry the kaala jamuns

- Put the ghee in a wok over moderate heat. Reduce the heat and fry the balls in batches, till dark brown. Keep flipping the balls, so that they brown evenly.

To complete the dish

- Remove the kaala jamuns from the oil with a perforated spatula and submerge them into the chashni.
- Best when served with lots of chashni at room temperature.

THEKUA

Sweet Wheat Flour Fritters

If I ever want to be thoroughly pampered by my family, then all I have to do is make Thekuas. Sweet, crumbly and crisp, thekua is one of the most important dishes in Bhojpuri cuisine, quite like the legendary Litti Chokha (Wheat Flour Balls Stuffed with Roasted Gram Flour and Served with a Spicy Potato Mash; [p 4](#)).

Thekua is mandatory for almost every festival or special occasion in the region, but in my house, you can always find them in cookie jars, for I prefer them over other cookies with my morning tea. Also, for a healthier option, you can bake them instead of deep-frying.

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Water: 1 cup

Jaggery (gud), broken into small pieces: 250 g

Whole wheat flour (atta): 400 g

Desiccated coconut: 150 g

Green cardamom pods, coarsely crushed: 7-8

Fennel seeds (saunf): 2 tsp

Ghee: 4 tbsp

Method

To knead the dough

- Put the water and jaggery in a pan over high heat and bring to a boil. Keep stirring, till the jaggery is totally dissolved.
- Sift the flour on to a large deep plate. Add the remaining ingredients for the dough and give it a good mix with your hands.
- Knead it into a stiff dough with

For frying the thekuas

Oil: to deep-fry

the help of the jaggery water.

To shape the thekuas

- Make balls with the dough about the size of golf balls.
- If using a thekua mould, flatten them on top of the mould and press it gently so that it can get the required impressions.
- If not using a mould, flatten them slightly with your hands and then use a fork to draw straight or zig-zag lines on top.

To fry the thekuas

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Lower the heat and deep-fry the thekua in batches, till light brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

Variation

To bake the thekuas, preheat the oven to 180°C. Brush a baking tray with a little sunflower oil and arrange the thekuas on it. Brush the tops with a little oil. Bake in the centre of the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes, till they are brown. Turn over and bake for another 2-3 minutes.

PEDAKIYA

Stuffed Sweet Dumplings

Teej is one of the most important and popular festivals in Bihar, during which married women fast continuously for twenty-four hours or more, praying for the health and well-being of their husbands. I remember my first Teej. I was scared to death at the thought of not having food or even water for the long duration. What made the abstinence even more difficult was the aroma of delicious Pedakiyas being fried in the kitchen.

The sweet is made on Teej as an offering to the gods by fasting women and are eaten post breaking the fast the next morning.

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

For the filling

Milk solids (khoya/mawa): 400 g
Sugar, preferably caster sugar: 175 g
Ghee: 2 tbsp
Almonds, peeled and chopped: 2
tbsp
Chironji (charoli seeds): 2 tbsp
Desiccated coconut: 200 g
Seedless raisins: 2 tbsp

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 3 cups

Method

To make the filling

- Crumble the khoya in a bowl and add the sugar. Mix with your fingers, till it is a coarse mixture.
- Put the ghee in a wok over moderate heat.
- Fry the almonds and chironji for 2-3 minutes. Drain and transfer to kitchen towels to absorb excess ghee.
- Add the raisins to the same pan

Ghee: 4 tbsp

Water: ½ cup

For frying the pedakiya

Oil: to deep-fry

and fry, till they puff up. Drain and place on the same kitchen towels. Add a little more ghee to the pan, if required and fry the coconut, till just golden. Do not allow it to turn brown. Drain and add to the kitchen towels.

- Add the fried ingredients to the khoya-sugar mixture and mix, till well blended.
- Your filling is ready. Traditionally you cannot taste the filling, if you are making it as an offering to God, but on any other occasion you can taste it to check if the sugar is according to your taste.

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour into a bowl and add the ghee. Mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading it into a stiff dough.

To assemble the pedakiyas

- Make small balls with the dough, even smaller than golf balls. Cover them with a damp cloth to prevent them from drying out.
- Flatten the balls into discs.
- Place about 1 tbsp of filling on one half of the disc.
- Spread a little water along the

edges of one half of the disc.

- Cover the filling with the other half of the disc to form a half moon.
- Press down on the edges with your fingers, or use a fork, to make a design and close the pastry. You can also use a special pedikaya mould if you have one.

To fry the pedikaya

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat. The oil should not be too hot, otherwise the pastry will develop bubbles.
- Fry the pedakiyas in batches, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

Variation

Instead of using khoya/mawa as a base for the filling, I sometimes use semolina or desiccated coconut.

MAAL PUA

Sweet Pancakes

My eldest aunt, Reena chachi, who hails from Ranchi, makes the most delicious Maal Puas ever! I was only four when she became part of our family, and since then her maal puas are considered incomparable! Even for those who are constantly watching their weight, my aunt's maal puas prove unputdownable. It almost became like a tradition in our family that every time she would come visiting, or was visited by others, sometimes travellers who would pass her city by train, she would always be ready with her supply of gorgeous maal puas!

Serves: 2-3

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the batter

Refined flour (maida): 125 g

Sugar: 40 g

Fennel seeds (saunf): 1 tsp

Green cardamom pods, crushed: 3-4

Milk: 40 ml

For frying the maal pua

Ghee: to deep-fry

Method

To make the batter

- Sift the flour into a large bowl and add the remaining dry ingredients for the batter. Mix well.
- Add a little milk at a time, while whisking to make a batter of medium pouring consistency.
- Adjust the sweetness, if required.

To fry the maal pua

- Put the ghee in a shallow frying

pan over moderate heat.

- Lower the heat and add a ladleful of batter to the pan. Spread the batter and fry on both sides, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess ghee.
- Serve them at room temperature.

Variation

Some people like to serve maal pua dipped in chashni or sugar syrup. Prepare the syrup as given for Parwal ki Mithai (Sweetened, Stuffed Pointed Gourd; [p. 140](#)). Soak the pancakes in the syrup for 5-6 minutes, remove and serve.

GUDWALA PUA

Jaggery and Wheat Flour Pancakes

Serves: 4-5

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Jaggery (gud), broken into small pieces: 1 cup

Water: ¼ cup

Whole wheat flour (atta): 1 cup

Fennel seeds (saunf): 1 tsp

Desiccated coconut: 2 tbsp

For frying the pua

Oil: to deep-fry

Method

To knead the dough

- Put the jaggery in a bowl with the water and set aside for 10 minutes.
- Mix with your hands, till the jaggery dissolves completely.
- Sift the flour into another bowl, add the fennel seeds and coconut and mix with your hands.
- Add a little jaggery water at a time, while kneading, to make a smooth, pliable dough. Set aside to rest for 20 minutes.

To shape the puas

- Make small balls with the dough, about the size of golf balls and roll them into flat discs.

To fry the puas

- Put the oil in a wok over

moderate heat.

- Fry the puas in batches, flipping them occasionally, till golden brown on both sides. Check to see that they have the texture of pooris.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.
- Serve them at room temperature.

KHURMA

Sugar-glazed Pastry

Khurma can be termed as the younger cousin of Khaja. It's much easier to make and takes less time. I have a strong suspicion that it must have been created to satisfy someone's sudden cravings for khaja!

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 25 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the dough

Refined flour (maida): 100 g + extra to dust

Oil: ½ cup

Water: 2 tbsp

For frying the khurma

Oil: to deep-fry

For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Granulated sugar: 150 g

Water: ¼ cup

Method

To knead the dough

- Sift the flour into a bowl. Add the oil and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to form a soft, pliable dough.
- Roll the dough into a smooth ball.

To shape the khurmas

- Lightly flour a work surface. Roll the ball of dough into a disc, ¼" thick.
- Using a sharp knife, cut the disc into ½" strips. Cut the strips into ½" squares.

To fry the khurmas

- Put the oil in a wok over low heat.
- Deep-fry the khurma in batches, till golden brown. Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil and to cool for 4-5 minutes.

To prepare the chashni

- Put sugar and water in a heavy-based pan over moderate heat. Keep stirring, till the sugar dissolves. Let it simmer for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat.

To complete the dish

- Add the khurmas to the chashni.
- Using a spatula, toss to coat them thoroughly with the chashni. Keep tossing, till the chashni cools down and settles on the khurmas.
- Let the sugar-glazed khurmas cool down completely, before you start eating them.

LATTHO

Jaggery-glazed Gram Flour Strings

Lattho is everyone's favourite sweet snack, especially during winters. Not only does it taste amazing, but is probably one of the best snacks with the winter morning cuppa. For the health-conscious, lattho is good news, for it has a coating of jaggery which is full of iron and keeps one warm during winters. Its preparation involves two stages – first, making the gram flour strings (sev) and second, soaking them in a thick jaggery syrup (gud chashni). To make lattho at home, you need a sev-making machine or a perforated spatula, commonly known as a jhariya.

Serves: 5-6

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the gram flour strings (sev)

Gram flour: 1 cup

Refined oil: ¼ cup

Tepid water

For frying the sev

Oil: to deep-fry

For the gud chashni (jaggery syrup)

Jaggery (gud), broken into small pieces: 3 cups

Water: 1½ cups

Method

To knead the dough

- Put the gram flour and refined oil in a bowl and mix with your fingers, till it resembles breadcrumbs.
- Add a little water at a time, while kneading to make a soft, pliable dough.
- Cover the dough and set aside to rest for 10 minutes.

To fry the gram flour strings

- Put the oil in a wok over

moderate heat.

- Put a handful of dough into the sev-making machine fitted with a disc that has large perforations. Please note that we need thick sev for this.
- Push the lever down to press the sev into the oil.
- If using a jhariya, put the batter on top of the jhariya and then press with your hands till the sev drops through the perforations.
- Fry, tossing all the while, till golden brown.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.
- Transfer to a plate and let them cool slightly before breaking them into small pieces.
- Repeat till the dough is over.

To prepare the gud chashni (jaggery syrup)

- Put the jaggery and water in a deep, heavy-based pan over low heat. Stir, till the jaggery dissolves. Pass the syrup through a colander into another heavy-based pan.
- Simmer for 6-7 minutes, till you have a thick syrup.

To glaze the gram flour strings

- Add the gram flour strings to the syrup and mix them in with a spatula, till they are well coated with the syrup. Keep

mixing for 3-4 minutes,
otherwise the syrup may settle
to the bottom of the pan, instead
of on top of the strings.

- Cool to room temperature
before serving.

BOONDI

Gram Flour Drops

While we were growing up, my sister and I would wait for every puja ceremony to end so that we could attack those beautifully decorated prasad thalis loaded with Boondi ké Laddoo (Gram Flour Sweet). Sometimes after stealing the laddoos, even before the commencement of a puja, my younger sister, Sushmita would justify it with statements like, ‘It’s totally unfair to expect a child to wait for four hours to eat boondi ké laddoo.’ She was somehow more daring, especially as she had the undivided support of our Dadi who would say, ‘Koi baat nahi, waisé bhi bal-gopalon ko pehlé bhog chadhta hai,’ (It doesn’t matter, children should be fed even before the gods.) Nothing like recalling those beautiful childhood stories!

Boondi is very popular across the country. It is such a versatile ingredient that it can make anything go crunchy, whether sweet or savoury with very little effort. I often sprinkle it on salads, jharmuri (traditionally made mixture served as snack, consisting of dried choora) and sometimes even on Chooré ka Pulao (Flaky Rice Pulao; [p. 46](#)). Here is the recipe for boondi, and not laddoos, simply because in my house, boondis get over much before they reach the stage of laddoos!

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

For the chashni (sugar syrup)

Sugar: 400 g

Method

To prepare the chashni

- Put the sugar and water in a deep, heavy-based pan over

Water: 200 g

Edible camphor (powdered): ½ tsp

For the boondi batter

Gram flour (besan): 2 cups

Water: 1 cup

Oil: 2 tsp

For frying the boondi

Oil: to deep-fry

moderate heat. Stir till the sugar dissolves. Raise the heat and cook for 2 minutes, till the syrup reduces.

- Remove the pan from the heat and set aside.

To make the boondi batter

- Put the gram flour in a large bowl.
- Add the water, a little at a time, while whisking, to make a smooth, runny batter.
- Add the oil and whisk again.

To fry the boondi

- Put the oil in a wok over moderate heat.
- Hold a perforated spatula or jhariya over the oil and pour some batter on it. As the batter passes through the jhariya, you will see several small drops of batter in the oil.
- Fry, tossing all the while, till golden.
- Drain and place on kitchen towels to absorb excess oil.

Variations

Sweet Boondi (Sweet Gram Flour Drops): Soak the fried boondi in the sugar syrup. Add a pinch of camphor and use a spatula to mix the boondi with the syrup thoroughly. Leave for 2-3 hours before enjoying the sweet boondi.

Boondi ké Laddoo (Gram Flour Sweet): Reduce the sugar syrup for 2-3

minutes longer and soak the boondis in the syrup for 30 minutes only.
Take fistfuls of the boondi and press them into balls.

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PEETHA ([see, p. 6](#))



DHUSKA (see, [p. 8](#))



TEHRI (see, [p. 13](#))



DAAL PITHORI (see, [p. 17](#))



SATTU KI KACHODI ([see, p. 21](#))



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CHOORA MATTAR (see, [p. 42](#))



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BAINGAN BADI KI SABJI ([see, p. 62](#))



KADHI BADI (see, [p. 74](#))



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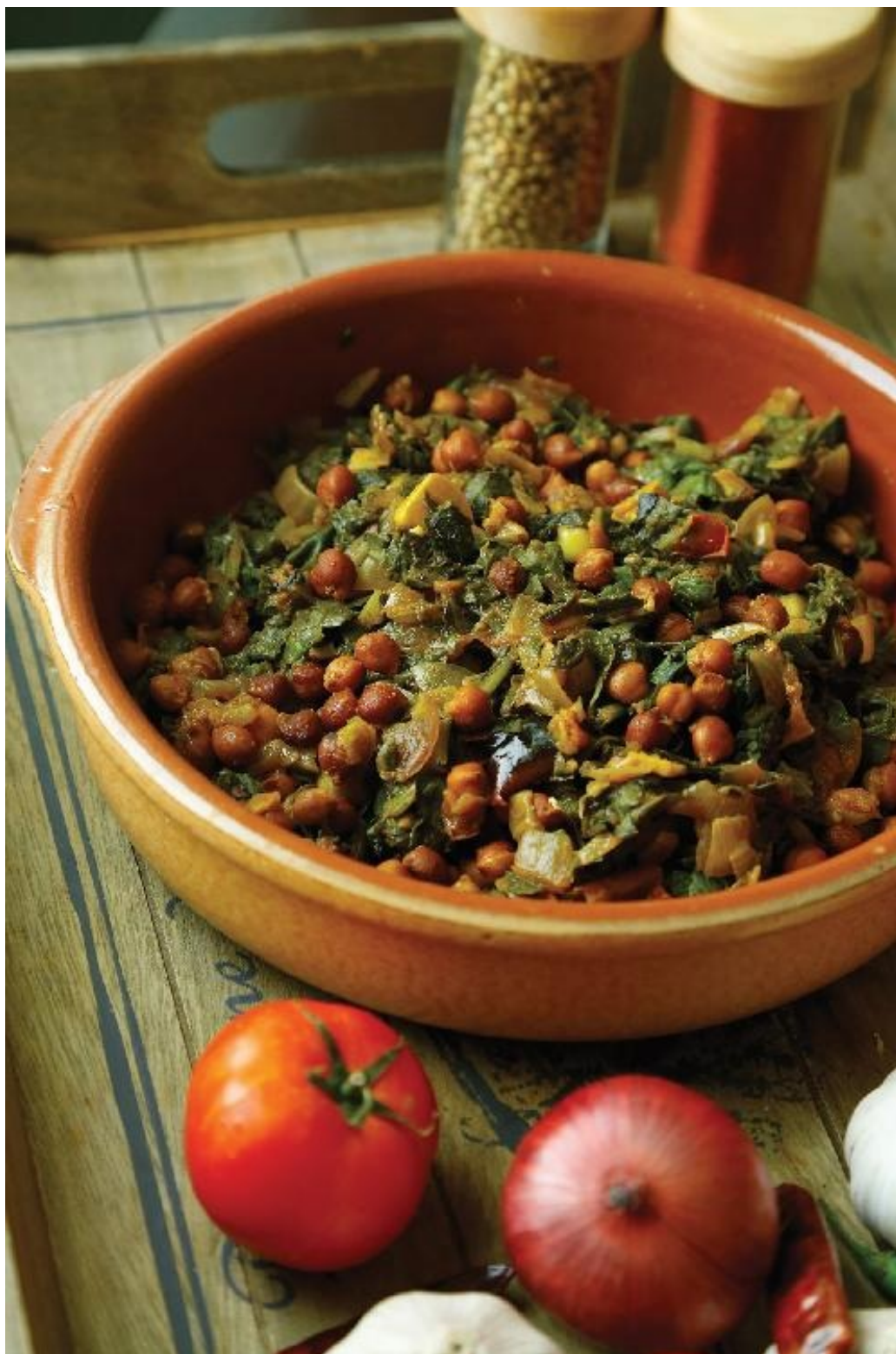
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